The Poetry of Ruan Ji and Xi Kang

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The Poetry of Ruan Ji and Xi Kang

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Table of Contents

Part 1: The Poetry of Ruan Ji (210–263) 1

Introduction 3

Singing My Cares 26

The Five-syllable-line Poems 26

The Four-syllable-line Poems 139

The Poetic Expositions (*fu*) 146

東平賦	Poetic Exposition on Dongping	146
首陽山賦	Poetic Exposition on Mount Shouyang	170
鳩賦	Poetic Exposition on the Cuckoos	176
獮猴賦	Poetic Exposition on the Macaque	180
清思賦	Poetic Exposition on Purifying My Longings	188
亢父賦	Poetic Exposition on Kangfu	206

Abbreviations 214

Additional Notes 216

Part 2: The Poetry of Xi Kang (ca. 223–262) 253

Introduction 255

Poems 266

五言贈秀才詩	A Pentasyllabic Poem Presented to the Cultivated Talent (also titled "Thoughts of the Ancients in Pentasyllabic Verse" 五言古意)	266
四言贈兄秀才入軍詩十八	Poems Presented to My Elder Brother the Cultivated Talent on His Entry into the Army, Eighteen Poems	268
幽憤詩	A Poem on My Indignation in Confinement	288
述志詩二首	Telling of My Intent, Two Poems	298
遊仙詩	Roaming with Immortals	302
六言詩十首	Hexasyllabic Verse, Ten Poems	306
重作四言詩七首	Recomposing Tetrasyllabic Verse, Seven Poems (also titled "Imitations of the Song of Qiu Hu" 代秋胡歌 or "Ballad of Qiu Hu" 秋胡行)	312
思親詩	Thinking of My Loved Ones	322

答二郭詩三首 A Response to the Two Guos, Three Poems 326
與阮德如詩 A Poem to Ruan Deru 334
酒會詩 A Poem Composed for a Wine Drinking Gathering 338
四言詩十一首 Tetrasyllabic Verse, Eleven Poems 340
五言詩三首 Pentasyllabic Verse, Three Poems 352
琴賦 Rhapsody on the Zither 358

Additional Notes 396

Modern Editions Cited 406

Part 1: The Poetry of Ruan Ji (210–263)

Translated by Stephen Owen
Volume edited by Xiaofei Tian

Introduction

Ruan Ji's Life and Times

Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–263) was born at the beginning of the final decade of the great Han dynasty (206 BCE to 220 CE). The Eastern Han Emperor Xian 獻帝 (r. 189–220) continued to reign, but had long since conceded the power to rule to Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220), whose political and military genius reunified the disintegrating empire in North China. Although Wu in the south and Shu in the west eluded Cao Cao's grasp, the population and agricultural base of North China was still, by far, the greater part of the old Han empire.

Ruan Ji's father, Ruan Yu 阮瑀 (d. 212), had served Cao Cao since Cao Cao's early rise to power. Until joining the circle around Cao Cao, the Ruans were a provincial family of little distinction; Ruan Yu held a series of minor posts, but enjoyed fame as a writer, who drafted letters for Cao Cao. For this talent Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226), Cao Cao's heir, included Ruan Yu in the company of the "Seven Masters of the Jian'an Reign" 建安七子.[1] Ruan Yu died when Ruan Ji was only two. Eight years later, in 220, Cao Cao himself passed away; Cao Pi then quickly did away with the fiction of the Han dynasty and declared himself emperor of a new dynasty, the Wei 魏. Cao Cao was posthumously made its first emperor, Wei Wudi 魏武帝.

Ruan Ji's mature life is a skeleton of facts surrounded by a large corpus of anecdotes of uncertain reliability. His works later came to be read in the context of an interpretive tradition lasting more than a millennium, but beginning centuries after Ruan Ji's death. This interpretive tradition presumes to know Ruan Ji's opinions regarding the tumultuous political events unfolding around him and has read Ruan Ji's works almost exclusively as responses to those events. Thus the Ruan Ji we now see in contemporary scholarly and popular representations is a confabulation of distinct historical layers. Here I will try to disaggregate those layers, beginning with the skeleton of facts and the political events in the background of his life. We will then look at the anecdotes, and finally address

1 Owen 1992, 66.

DOI 10.1515/9781501503870-003,

the political interpretation of his works, which appears in full form almost five centuries after his death.

Cao Pi founded the Wei dynasty, but he had neither his father's political nor military genius. He distrusted members of his close family, and appointed others to positions of political power. The formidable Wei army was under the control of Sima Yi 司馬懿 (179–251), one of his father's best generals. Cao Pi's brief reign of six years was followed by that of his son Cao Rui 曹叡 (r. 226–239), who had even less talent for ruling than his father. It was in Cao Rui's reign that Ruan Ji reached adulthood, and it seems that early on Ruan Ji was wary of becoming involved with the factions forming in court. When Cao Rui died in the spring of 239, succession passed to his eight-year-old heir Cao Fang 曹芳, with Sima Yi and a distant kinsman Cao Shuang 曹爽 acting as co-regents. Of Cao Rui's many follies, this may have been the worst, conjoining a courtier with close ties to the intellectual life of the capital with a powerful old general. After Cao Rui passed away, Cao Shuang soon ousted Sima Yi, who quietly retired to his estate and bided his time. Visited by He Yan 何晏 (195–249), a famous contemporary intellectual and advisor of Cao Shuang, Sima Yi put on a theatrical display of senescence, after which He Yan reported to Cao Shuang that the old general was no threat. This proved to be not the case. In 249 Sima Yi returned to the capital with his troops. Catching Cao Shuang unawares, Sima Yi slaughtered Cao Shuang, his entire family, and all his followers—including He Yan.

The house Sima found itself "riding the tiger"—and they rode it effectively, killing any opposition, real or supposed. For about fifteen years, Sima Yi and his two sons Sima Shi 司馬師 and Sima Zhao 司馬昭 preserved the fiction of the Wei dynasty under three puppet emperors, until at last, in 265, Sima Yi's grandson, Sima Yan 司馬炎 (236–290), deposed the last Wei emperor and founded the Jin 晉 dynasty (265–420). After only forty-five years the Wei dynasty ended as it began, with the deposition of a puppet emperor.

Ruan Ji's readers have largely concerned themselves with what Ruan Ji was thinking in these turbulent times. That is a question that cannot be answered with a modicum of certainty. The better question is: what was Ruan Ji doing? First, he clearly avoided any association with Cao Shuang when he was in power. Second, every post he accepted was under the Sima family, especially Sima Zhao, who favored him and protected

him. Shortly before Ruan Ji's death, Sima Zhao, enfeoffed as Duke of Jin, was offered elevation to "Prince of Jin" 晉王, which would prepare the way for his possible succession to the imperial throne. As was proper, Sima Zhao repeatedly demurred. An anecdote has it that one night Ruan Ji was roused—perhaps from a drunken stupor—to write a letter urging Sima Zhao to accept the position of Prince. Ruan Ji produced a brilliantly argued piece in a single draft. We can be reasonably sure that Sima Zhao did not need to have his mind actually changed by such a persuasion; rather, he needed such a letter as a public document of such weight that it might seem to have "changed his mind." When Ruan Ji died in 263, still during the Wei dynasty, he died a loyal servant of the house Sima. The Simas were a bloody lot, but for a time they held the empire together. After the first reigning Jin emperor, Sima Yan, passed away in 290, the stability of the dynasty collapsed swiftly and disastrously.

The dominant intellectual fashion of Ruan Ji's day was "arcane learning," *xuanxue* 玄學, and Ruan Ji was very much a part of it. From a modern perspective "arcane learning" was a disparate aggregate of interests and values: serious philosophical thought, fashionable mumbo jumbo, legends of immortals, strange beasts, and worlds that lay beyond the constraints of gravity, mortality, society, and other inconveniences of this world. The "distinction" of the aficionados of arcane learning was displayed by a theatrical eccentricity and aggressive disregard for the norms of social behavior. Closely related to some of these interests was a technology of bodily self-transformation, involving breathing techniques, herbs, and cinnabar. If these various concerns seemed to Ruan Ji's contemporaries to belong together, their apparent unity may have been negative: all were restricted to the interests of one particular practitioner and militantly excluded political, social, and familial values.

There was, indeed, a community of the like-minded. Ruan Ji has been forever associated with the later grouping, the "Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove," *zhulin qixian* 竹林七賢. There is, however, something of a paradox of a "community" of individuals so profoundly absorbed in their personal means of self-transformation. The most famous representation of the "Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove" is a series of tomb panels from the Southern Dynasties (420–589), carved with the images of the "Seven Worthies." They are, at once, all there together, and yet each is totally absorbed in his own private activity.

It would be an anachronistic mistake to construe "arcane learning" as representing "Daoism," as opposed to "Confucianism." Ruan Ji was well-versed in the "Confucian" Classics, and the Confucius of the *Analects* was clearly on a par with Laozi and Zhuangzi, the "Daoist" sages. Ruan Ji's Confucius, however, often was looking "outward," beyond this world, rather than being the advocate of punctilious, archaic etiquette. Ruan Ji composed a series of philosophical essays: a "Discourse on Music," "Yue lun" 樂論; "Understanding the *Changes* [the *Yijing*, *Classic of Changes*]," "Tong Yi lun" 通易論; "Making Sense of Zhuangzi," "Da Zhuang lun" 達莊論; and "Understanding Laozi," "Tong Lao lun" 通老論.

Ruan Ji's longest and most important prose work is "The Account of the Great Man," "Daren xiansheng zhuan" 大人先生傳. It mixes prose and verse, and stands somewhere between poetry and prose. Poetry lies in its past, in the "Poetic Exposition on the Great Man," "Daren fu" 大人賦 of Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (ca. 179–117 BCE), and behind that, in the "Far Roaming," "Yuan you" 遠遊, of the *Chuci* 楚辭. Prose lies in its future, perhaps most notably "The Account of Master Five Willows," "Wuliu xiansheng zhuan" 五柳先生傳, by Tao Qian 陶潛 (365–427). The Great Man is Ruan Ji's image of perfected being, who responds to a letter from a Confucian type, then meets a recluse, then a wood-gatherer. He criticizes the limits of each in turn and expounds his own values.

The anecdotes show Ruan Ji trying to live the values of the Great Man in a world of limitation, the very mortal condition that the Great Man had completely transcended. The majority of the anecdotes have their most memorable iteration in *A New Account of Tales of the World*, *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語, an anecdote collection compiled around 430 in the court of Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444), and supplemented by a fifth-century commentary by Liu Xiaobiao 劉孝標 (462–521). While some of these anecdotes can be traced back to sources earlier than Liu Yiqing's compilation, their historical veracity is uncertain: some may be true as told, some may contain a grain of historical truth, and some may be inventions. These anecdotes, however, constituted one face of Ruan Ji for the future.

Perhaps the anecdote most commonly alluded to is not from *A New Account of Tales of the World*, but rather from the lost *Annals of the Family of Wei*, *Weishi chunqiu* 魏氏春秋, preserved in Ruan Ji's biography in the *Jin History*, *Jin shu* 晉書. It is also the most suggestive.

> 時率意獨駕，不由徑路，車迹所窮，輒慟哭而反。
>
> Often he would drive off alone according to his whim and would not follow any path or road. Whenever the tracks of his carriage came to an impasse, he would always break into piteous weeping and turn back.

It is a fine story of the determination to go as one pleases and not to follow the beaten track; but the attempt leads inevitably to failure and rediscovery of limitation.

An equally famous story was preserved in the commentary to *A New Account of Tales of the World* (24.4, Mather 425). Xi Kang's 嵇康 (also Ji Kang, ca. 223–ca. 262) panache was on several occasions contrasted with the stolid ordinariness of his older brother Xi Xi 嵇喜. Ruan Ji had the capacity to roll his eyes so that only the whites of his eyes were visible. Xi Xi went to offer Ruan Ji his condolences when Ruan was in mourning. Ruan Ji looked at him with only the whites of his eyes, and Xi Xi withdrew in embarrassment. Xi Kang then went to visit Ruan Ji with ale and a zither (both forbidden in mourning), and Ruan Ji welcomed him.[2] This is but one of the many stories about Ruan Ji's behavior in mourning his mother. His carousing during the mourning period was the usual motif, but in other anecdotes it is combined with signs of extreme grief.

The pleasure and surprise of many of the Ruan Ji anecdotes is in the recognition of "natural" behavior within a rule-bound system enforced by a quasi-Confucian education that tried to make that system "second nature." One of the most telling anecdotes concerns Ruan Ji's pretty neighbor, who worked with her husband tending a bar (21.8, Mather 402). Ruan Ji would drink in the bar; and when he was drunk, he would lie down beside the wife. The husband was, unsurprisingly, suspicious; but on investigating their behavior, he realized that Ruan Ji simply wanted to sleep it off. As was the case with socially sanctioned expressions

2 The primary anecdote in *A New Account of Tales of the World*, to which this anecdote is appended, has Xi Kang's friend Lü An 呂安 going to visit Xi Kang. Xi Kang was not at home at the time, and Xi Xi went out to welcome Lü An. Lü An refused to go in. On leaving, Lü An wrote the character *feng* 鳳 on the gate, usually meaning "phoenix," but in this context divided into its components *fan niao* 凡鳥, "ordinary bird."

of grief in mourning, taboos against contact between men and women were a fertile ground for such anecdotes (see also 21.7, Mather 402).

At least one famous anecdote seems to be euhemeristic. Prominent figures were often referred to by the title of the public office they held. In Ruan Ji's case this convention gave later ages "Infantry Colonel Ruan," *Ruan bubing* 阮步兵. One can scarcely imagine a less likely "Infantry Colonel" than Ruan Ji. When we learn, however, that this was a sinecure guard appointment (*bubing xiaowei* 步兵校尉) given by Sima Zhao, some of the incongruity disappears, and we see another example of the singular favor with which Sima Zhao treated Ruan Ji. But the kind provision of a salary to give pragmatic support to a favorite was, for a later audience, incompatible with the image of Ruan Ji as a free-spirited eccentric. Therefore we have an anecdote that Ruan Ji requested the post on hearing that the command had a large store of ale (21.5, Mather 401).

The "Wei Loyalist"?

This brings us to the "other face" of Ruan Ji in the later tradition, the passionate loyalist of the Wei dynasty, deeply troubled to see the rise of the Sima family and their seizure of power. Every scholar of Ruan Ji knows far more than I do about his political opinions. On the surface of it, Ruan Ji was, for most of his mature life, a loyal adherent of the Sima family, receiving protection from Sima Zhao, the most powerful man in the kingdom. He died several years before the Jin replaced the Wei, and yet his full biography is included in the *Jin History*.[3] The Wei dynasty lasted only forty-five years; its rulers passed quickly from mediocrity to incompetence to underage puppets. The dynasty came to a fitting end as it began, with the deposition of a puppet ruler. It was not a dynasty that could inspire much confidence or loyalty; its most vocal supporters were the Sima clan—and the fiction of the "Wei" was no doubt useful for them. That support began to unravel in the summer of 260 when, in a fit of temper, the young "emperor" Cao Mao 曹髦 (241–260) led a band of a few hundred men to attack Sima Zhao. To observe that this was unwise would be an understatement: a small band of inexperienced courtiers and sinecure guardsmen hastily set out to kill the Commander of the Army,

3 He is given a few lines after the biography of his father in the *Account of Wei*, *Wei zhi* 魏志, in the standard *Account of the Three Kingdoms*, *Sanguo zhi* 三國志.

with a large contingent of trained and experienced troops. Cao Mao was killed in the fighting. Yet Sima Zhao established another Cao on the throne and executed the entire family of the officer who killed Cao Mao. A few years later, with the help of Ruan Ji, Sima Zhao was elevated to Prince, preparing the way for a smooth dynastic transition.

It is worth examining when and how the assumption formed that Ruan Ji's poetic works were testimony to his loyalty to the Wei. Out of this assumption a large commentarial literature has evolved, trying to adjudicate to which particular political event a poem or poetic exposition is referring and how it stakes a position, putatively protesting the behavior of one or another political actor. We might first note that only two of his poetic expositions give us a date and none of his poems are datable on external grounds.

Before tracing the process of how this interpretive assumption took shape, we might consider another anecdote about Ruan Ji, very different from the others. This is also included in *A New Account of Tales of the World* (1.15, Mather 8), but has a source earlier than the other anecdotes, in the *Family Admonitions*, *Jiajie* 家誡, of Li Bing 李秉, from the late third century (cited in Liu Xiaobiao's commentary). Li Bing claims to have heard this directly from Sima Zhao in a longer passage in which Sima Zhao instructed various officials on the requisites for serving in a post of responsibility. One of those requisites was "caution," *shen* 慎.

> 天下之至慎者, 其唯阮嗣宗乎。每與之言, 言及玄遠, 而未嘗評論時事, 臧否人物, 可謂至慎乎。
>
> Is not Ruan Sizong [Ruan Ji] the most cautious of men in the world?! Whenever I talk with him, his words concern the arcane and remote; never once did he pass judgment on current events or either praise or dispraise anyone—might this not be considered the greatest caution?

The source gives this anecdote a credibility greater than that of any other anecdote. Ruan Ji's "caution" might be kept in mind when we consider the earliest interpretive comment on Ruan Ji's poetic series "Singing My Cares," "Yonghuai" 詠懷, a century and a half later. This earliest commentary was composed by the Liu-Song 劉宋 court poet Yan Yanzhi 顏延之 (384–456), quoted in part in Li Shan's 李善 (d. 689) commen-

tary on the selected "Singing My Cares" in the early sixth-century anthology *Wen xuan* 文選:[4]

> 說者阮籍在晉文代, 嘗慮禍患, 故發此詠。
>
> They say that in the age of Prince Wen of Jin [Sima Zhao], Ruan Ji was worried that disaster might befall him and thus produced these songs.

This is amply testified to in "Singing My Cares," filled with death, ruin, dark foreboding, and the desire to escape, preferably to become an immortal. He was "the most cautious of men," who wanted to stay alive. Yan Yanzhi's comments were supplemented by Shen Yue's 沈約 (441–513), also preserved by citation in Li Shan's commentary. All of Shen Yue's comments refer the series and the individual poems in it to general ethical categories, and never mention anything regarding Ruan Ji's feelings about the Wei or the Sima family.

The earliest hint—and it is a peculiar hint—that Ruan Ji's poems might be referencing contemporary people and events does not occur until the early sixth century and Zhong Rong's 鍾嶸 comments on Ruan in his *Grades of Poets*, *Shipin* 詩品:

> 其源出於小雅。無雕蟲之功，而詠懷之作，可以陶性靈，發幽思，言在耳目之內，情寄八荒之表，洋洋乎會於風雅，使人忘其鄙近，自致遠大，頗多感慨之詞。厥旨淵放，歸趣難求。顏延年注解，怯言其志。
>
> The origins of his poetry derive from the "Lesser Odes." He lacks the merit of artful crafting, yet his works on "Singing My Cares" may fashion the spirit and express secret thoughts. The language is in our eyes and ears, but he invests his feeling beyond the encircling wilderness, a flooding fullness that meets the "Airs and Odes" and makes one forget the base ordinariness [of his language].

4 Song edition of *Liuchen zhu Wen xuan* 六臣註文選, 23. This passage is clearly marked as Yan Yanzhi's comment. The other passage that speaks of "criticizing" is clearly marked as Li Shan's comment. The 1181 edition of *Wen xuan* marks Yan Yanzhi's comment above, but does not mark the second comment on "criticizing"; this usually means it is to be taken as Li Shan's.

> His expression of self was far-reaching and grand, with especially much language overcome with feeling. His point is deep and unrestrained, but it is hard to find where his implications were leading. In his commentary Yan Yanzhi was too apprehensive to say Ruan's aims outright.

Zhong Rong doesn't know what Ruan Ji is referring to, using the term *guiqu* 歸趣, translated as "where his implications were leading," a term Du Yu 杜預 (222–285) had used in the preface to his commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, *Chunqiu* 春秋: "If the Classic itself [i.e. *Chunqiu*] has no explicit moral but rather speaks just about what happened, then the commentary simply says directly where the implications are leading" 其經無義例, 因行事而言, 則傳直言其歸趣而已. In other words, the commentary supplies the specifics.

Zhong Rong seems to presume that Ruan Ji must have been making judgments on contemporary events, but that Yan Yanzhi was unwilling to state them directly. This may suggest that Yan Yanzhi sensed the intent behind the poems, but was unwilling to hazard a guess. Zhong Rong himself does not know (and himself is not willing to venture a guess), but he implies there is something on Ruan Ji's mind that is the hermeneutic key to the poems. The presumption of indirect reference to current events seems to underwrite the "Singing My Cares" by the poet Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581).

In his *Wen xuan* commentary Li Shan is more explicit:

> 嗣宗身仕亂朝，嘗恐罹謗遇禍，因茲發詠，故每有憂生之嗟。雖志在刺譏，而文多隱避，百世之下，難以情測。故粗明大意，略其幽旨也。
>
> Ruan Ji served a dynasty in turmoil and feared meeting disaster through slander. Because of this he produced these songs, always sighing with worry for his life. Although his aims were to criticize, his expression is obscure and evasive, so that after a hundred generations, they are hard to fathom. Thus we may roughly understand the general meaning and get the concealed point only incompletely.

We might note what has been added to Yan Yanzhi's basic claim: a dynasty in turmoil, potential slander, and above all the desire to "criticize."

This is not to criticize categories of behavior, but to criticize people and events. But Li Shan does not claim to know precisely the particular people and events Ruan Ji is criticizing.

The eighth-century *Wen xuan* commentary by the "Five Officers," *wuchen* 五臣, was done to answer considerable dissatisfaction with the Li Shan commentary. Li Shan, it was felt, supplied sources, but did not explain what the texts in the *Wen xuan* were "about." Indeed, he explicitly said that he did not know what "Singing My Cares" were "about," in the sense of what they referred to in Ruan Ji's historical world. The "Five Officers" filled this hermeneutic gap where they could in their commentary; they decided that the poems must be about the decline of the Wei and the ascendancy of the Sima family. Their sense of historical context is never very specific; and indeed they sometimes do not seem to have realized that Ruan Ji did not live to see the end of the Wei.

Five centuries after Ruan Ji's life and work we have the basic framework of the interpretive game established. Through the late imperial period, and especially in the Qing dynasty (1644–1912) and modern times the poems have been mapped largely on the events following the death of Cao Rui. There is always controversy regarding which moment in that history best contextualizes the poem, but the hermeneutic assumptions and the presumption that Ruan Ji is indeed usually referring to current events are constant. This is founded on the faith that this is what Chinese poets "always" did and that Ruan Ji, being a great poet, must be a good person and that a good person was always loyal to his dynasty.

Although Ruan Ji did not write much about "loyalty," *zhong* 忠, it was indeed an old Confucian value, applying to the officer, *chen* 臣, of a lord, who granted the person position, rewards, and dignity. The system broke down when adjudicating whether the officer of a lord owed his "loyalty" to his immediate lord, or to the ruler whom the lord at least nominally served. Ruan Ji's father, Ruan Yu, grew up in the Han; but he owed his loyalty to Cao Cao. In the same way, Ruan Ji owed his loyalty to the Sima family, who in turn owed their loyalty to the Wei. As Ruan Yu's biography was given in the "Account of Wei" in the *Account of the Three Kingdoms*, so Ruan Ji's biography was given in the *Jin History*.[5] Later, in the evolution

5 In part this can be justified by the posthumous elevation of Cao Cao to Wei's first emperor, and by the Jin's posthumous elevation of several generations of Sima family heads to the imperial throne.

of Daoxue, "Neo-Confucianism," "loyalty" was always to the emperor. If a dynasty was overthrown, a good person would refuse to serve the new dynasty. The Song dynasty began to have "loyalists" in this sense. Loyalty to the dynasty alone was assumed in the Ming and Qing, and Ruan Ji was read through that assumption. Ruan Ji's interests in "arcane learning" were understood as the expression of his despair at the political situation: his obscurity was explained as hiding his true intentions. The possibility that Ruan Ji actually believed that the social and political sphere was not the most important thing in life was ideologically unthinkable.

Here we must pause for a moment to weigh Sima Zhao's judgment that Ruan Ji was "the most cautious of men" against the Qing and modern versions of Ruan Ji as someone offering scathing criticism of the Sima rise to power. Claim as one may that the criticism is indirect and deliberately obscure, it is a simple fact that political innuendo is far easier for a contemporary to detect than for a critic from over a millennium and a half later. If Ruan's contemporary readers were like recent commentators, looking for specific "targets" in the political world, then "the most cautious of men" would have been the most incautious, and Ruan Ji would surely have preceded his friend Xi Kang to the execution ground. If, however, readers understood such poems typologically rather than *ad hominem*, then there was no problem. Moreover, we do not know if the poems were in circulation in Ruan Ji's lifetime or when any one of them was written.

We should set aside the assumption that Ruan Ji was a Wei loyalist responding to the threat that the Sima family posed to the continuation of the dynasty. That mode of reading can be retained as a possibility, but it is an interpretive stance based on no real evidence and one that raises more problems than it solves. If, as in one poem, Ruan Ji seems to predict the fall of Wei to Jin, we cannot immediately assume that such a prediction would have been unpleasing to his lord, Sima Zhao.

What Was Happening in Poetry

Scholars of Ruan Ji have been so intensely engaged in what was happening in the political world on whose margins Ruan Ji lived that they often do not ask what was happening in poetry—and, specifically, in poetry in the five-syllable line. Poetry in the five-syllable line seems to have been a popular verse form of the Luoyang 洛陽 region, its

characteristic form first preserved from the last part of the second century CE. It was a lower register form, in contrast to most verse in the four-syllable line, and had been popular in the court of the Caos. The most celebrated poet in this form in Ruan Ji's youth was Cao Cao's son, Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232). Cao Zhi had inherited the highly formulaic poetics of this verse form and extended its range to new topics. This gradual maturation of the form continued seamlessly later in the poetry of Zhang Hua 張華 (232–300) and the younger Western Jin (265–316) poets. In between—twenty years younger than Cao Zhi and twenty years older than Zhang Hua—was Ruan Ji, whose poetry was different.

In his five-syllable-line poetry Ruan Ji both belonged to his century and did unique things as well. Third-century poetry largely involved the poet speaking as an easily recognizable "type"; sometimes these "types" involved roles and sentiments that the poet would experience in his life (the courtier at a feast, the person parting from someone); in other situations the type might be an imagined person (the soldier on the frontier, the woman longing for an absent beloved). Each type involved constraints: things that should be said, things that might be said, and things that should not be said.

Understanding these types and their conventions is useful because it helps us distinguish those poems by Ruan Ji that reiterate a standard type from poems that are truly unexpected or have an intensity that goes far beyond the norm. Some poems in "Singing My Cares" could have been preserved under the name of another third-century poet, and no one would feel any reason to question the attribution. The most salient example of this type is the first poem of "Singing My Cares," which could easily disappear into the surviving work of any third-century poet; but at the head of the *Wen xuan* selection of "Singing My Cares" it has been invested with a weight that it simply would not have had elsewhere. This is one of the clearest cases in which we can see "authorship" as an attribute of a poem: its place in Ruan Ji's collection profoundly changed the way critics read the poem.[6] Other poems are unique to "Singing My Cares," and would seem out of place under any other name.

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6 It is the first poem in the standard sequence and in the Fan Qin edition, but the fourth poem in the Xue Yingqi edition.

It is always worth considering what writers were popular when a poet was a young man. In Ruan Ji's youth there is no question who was the dominant poet in the world of letters: Cao Zhi. Ruan Ji's indebtedness to Cao Zhi is often noted and can be seen throughout his poems. On some occasions Cao Zhi wrote with strong feeling about experiences in his life, and he tells us what those were, as in "Presented to Biao, Prince of Baima," "Zeng Baima wang Biao" 贈白馬王彪. Even here Cao Zhi borrows established roles, though combining them in a singular way. In other poems Cao Zhi often assumed personae, roles of characters other than the poet himself. In different iterations such roles were often at odds, even contradictory, somewhat like a poet engaged in arguing different sides of the same question, as we find in European rhetorical training. In "White Horses," "Baima pian" 白馬篇, Cao Zhi writes of the frontier soldier, concluding:

棄身鋒刃端,	He sacrifices himself to sword-tip and blade,
性命安可懷。	how can he care about his own life?
父母且不顧,	He shows no concern for father or mother,
何言子與妻。	not to mention children or wife.
名編壯士籍,	His name will be compiled in the registries of the bold warriors,
不得中顧私。	he cannot concern himself with private interests.
捐軀赴國難,	He gives up his life to respond to the kingdom's troubles,
視死忽如歸。	and he looks on death with indifference, like coming home.

In "Singing My Cares" 53 Ruan Ji assumes the same role:

壯士何慷慨,	How full of feeling is the bold warrior!—
志欲威八荒。	his aims are to overawe the wilds in all directions.
驅車遠行役,	He drives his carriage on far campaign,
受命念自忘。	receiving his orders, he broods on forgetting concern for self.
良弓挾烏號,	Of fine bows he carries Ravenscreech,
明甲有精光。	his bright armor gives off sparkling light.
臨難不顧生,	In danger he takes no heed for his life;
身死魂飛揚。	the body dies, the soul soars aloft.

豈為全軀士，	How could he be one of those gentlemen who stays unharmed?—
效命爭戰場。	he sacrifices his life on the battlefield.
忠為百世榮，	His loyalty will be glorious for a hundred generations,
義使令名彰。	his sense of right makes his good name famous.
垂聲謝後世，	His reputation will be passed down to later generations,
氣節故有常。	his spirit and principles truly are constant.

In "Singing My Cares" 47 we see the military figure boasting of the prowess similar to that which we see in "White Horses," but concluding:

軍旅令人悲，	Yet army campaigns make a person sad,
烈烈有哀情。	and feelings of sorrow blaze within.
念我平常時，	When I considered how I had spent my life,
悔恨從此生。	bitter regret arose from that moment on.

Such contradictions never trouble a reader of Cao Zhi—perhaps because he is writing "*yuefu* poems," *yuefu shi* 樂府詩 (a type of poem that presumes that the topic or speaker is a "type," not the poet himself). Ruan Ji, however, is supposed to be "Singing My Cares," and representing contradictory values as one's own creates a problem in the Chinese quest for a unified person behind the text. Some positions, such as the desire for and faith in the possibility of physical immortality, are repeated so often that they seem like Ruan Ji's own position; but in "Singing My Cares" 70 we see the return of the old doubt about the validity of accounts of the immortals.

Ruan Ji's poetry in the five-syllable line "comes later" than that by Cao Zhi and his predecessors. Sometimes Ruan Ji makes "coming later" a theme. The earlier, anonymous "old poems," *gushi* 古詩, tell the listener that life is short so he should spend his money and make merry; Ruan Ji (who always believes "life is short") considers what happens when the money is gone in "Singing My Cares" 7:

平生少年時，	As I used to be as a young man,
輕薄好絃歌。	flighty and light-hearted, I loved songs sung to strings.
西遊咸陽中，	I roamed west to Xianyang
趙李相經過。	and frequented the Zhaos and Lis.

娛樂未終極，	Before my pleasures had been enjoyed to the fullest,
白日忽蹉跎。	the bright sun suddenly slipped away.
驅馬復來歸，	I galloped my horse to go back home,
反顧望三河。	then turned to gaze at the Three Rivers region.
黄金百鎰盡，	A hundred pounds of gold were gone—
資用常苦多。	the expenses were always terribly great.
北臨太行道，	Looking north on road through the Taihang Range,
失路將如何。	what shall I do if I lose my way?

We can thus far place Ruan Ji "in" the poetic tradition, but here things get more complicated. When we look at poetry from the Western Jin in the last third of the third century, it is hard to find any trace of Ruan Ji and "Singing My Cares" in their work, though the "Western Jin" poets were intensely aware of Cao Zhi and early third-century poetry. We find the title "Singing My Cares" reappearing in the fourth century in philosophical poems associated with Buddhist monks.[7] By the early fifth century Ruan's "Singing My Cares" were prominent enough to merit a commentary by one of the two most distinguished literary figures of the age. After that his influence became increasingly strong into the Tang.

Some might object that Cao Zhi's *yuefu* poems are a different genre and make different claims than poems entitled "Singing My Cares." As suggested above, the former are usually fictional types, while "Singing My Cares" is a title that presumes the speaker as a historical person. It is not so simple. First, we do not know if Ruan Ji himself gave the title "Singing My Cares," or a later compiler of his poems did. Second, we easily see the link between *yuefu shi* and such poems in the surviving fragments of the ill-starred scholar of "arcane learning," He Yan, an adherent of Cao Shuang who, as mentioned above, died with other members of Cao Shuang's faction.

First let us consider Cao Zhi's "Ahh," "Xujie pian" 吁嗟篇:[8]

吁嗟此轉蓬，	Ahh, this tumbling dandelion puff,
居世何獨然。	why does it alone live in the world this way?
長去本根逝，	Long it has left its roots and gone off,
夙夜無休閒。	morning and night, without rest or ease.

7 E.g., Zhi Dun 支遁 (314–366), Lu Qinli 1080–1082.
8 Lu Qinli 423.

東西經七陌,	East and west it crosses the seven paths,
南北越九阡。	north and south it passes over the nine trails.
卒遇回風起,	All at once I meet with a whirling gust rising
吹我入雲間。	that blows me into the clouds.
自謂終天路,	I thought that I would cover all Heaven's roads,
忽然下流淵。	when suddenly I went down to the flowing gulf.
驚飆接我出,	A sudden gale took me out
故歸彼中田。	and sent me back as before to among those fields.
當南而更北,	Facing south and then again north,
謂東而反西。	I intend to go east, and instead go west.
宕宕當何依,	Swept along, what should I rely on?—
忽亡而忽存。	suddenly lost and as suddenly preserved.
飄颻周八澤,	I go spinning all over the Eight Marshes,
連翩歷五山。	continuously passing the Five Mountains.
流轉無恆處,	I go rolling along with no constant place,
誰知吾苦艱。	who understands the hardships I suffer?
願為中林草,	I would rather be a plant in the woods,
秋隨野火燔。	to burn away with the wildfires in fall.
糜滅豈不痛,	Of course it would hurt to be destroyed,
願與根荄連。	but I would rather stay joined to my roots.

A poem by He Yan, entitled "Stating My Aims," "Yanzhi" 言志, follows Cao Zhi's poem closely:[9]

轉蓬去其根,	The tumbling dandelion puff leaves its roots,
流飄從風移。	drifts whirling, moving with the wind.
芒芒四海塗,	Vast are the paths over the four seas,
悠悠焉可彌。	on and on, how can they be traversed?
願為浮萍草,	I would rather be the floating duckweed,
託身寄清池。	lodging myself in the clear pool.
且以樂今日,	I would take pleasure in the present—
其後非所知。	what comes afterward is not known.

9 Lu Qinli 468; *Chuxue ji* 27. Since the source of this poem is an encyclopedia (i.e. *Chuxue ji* 27), which usually includes excerpts rather than entire texts, the poem is almost certainly a condensed version of He Yan's original, which probably supplied rephrased versions of the other lines in Cao Zhi's piece.

He Yan's title, "Stating My Aims," is exactly parallel to Ruan Ji's "Singing My Cares," *yong huai* 詠懷; and since "stating my aims" is the normative phrase, "singing my cares" is probably the derivative phrase.

Many of the poems in "Singing My Cares" are without precedent or treat a common theme with an intensity that profoundly changes it. Seeking the immortals was a very common theme, but in Ruan Ji's hand it acquires an urgency that is distinctive. If the exposition in earlier five-syllable-line poems was supremely predictable, Ruan Ji sometimes shifts from topic to topic in ways that seem basically private associations, alien to the shared poetics of his predecessors. He has passages whose significance we can barely understand; attempts to rationalize them seem forced. This may have been the heart of the mystery of his works that so struck later readers and invited the exegetical tradition that grew up around him.

We might single out one aspect of his poetry that was new (and perhaps shocking) in poetry in the five-syllable line: this is vituperation. This might seem strange for "the most cautious of men," but he chooses his targets with care. His human targets were extreme types—the fawning courtier, the catamite, the punctilious and sometimes hypocritical Confucian. Yet for a reader to take such a poem as, perhaps, directed at oneself, he would have to see himself in the caricature of a type. Vituperation does have precedent in poetic expositions, and Ruan Ji vents his ire on two locales in Shandong in his poetic expositions. Another of the poetic expositions, "The Macaque," seems satirical. Although Ruan Ji may have had a particular individual in mind, we have no idea who that person might have been, and attempts to identify the target are purely speculative.

The Bibliographical Record

Ruan Ji's is one of the handful of literary collections that have survived independently from the pre-Tang.[10] The "Bibliography" monograph in

10 We can easily identify reconstituted collections because the overwhelming majority of texts can be found in other sources—anthologies, encyclopedias (*leishu* 類書), histories, and so on. By contrast, collections that have survived independently have a large majority of texts that have no extant sources other than the collection itself.

the seventh-century *Sui History*, *Sui shu* 隋書, refers to the collection in ten fascicles, with a Liang 梁 dynasty (502–557) bibliographical notice of a version of the collection in fifteen fascicles. Song 宋 (960–1279) bibliographies give the collection in five or ten fascicles. As was the case with many books, the collection dropped out of sight after the Song. The seventeen "Singing My Cares" included in *Wen xuan* of course survived, but the others temporarily disappeared, along with most of the prose and poetic expositions. When Liu Lü 劉履 (d. 1383) compiled the *Fengya yi* 風雅翼 to supplement the *Wen xuan*, he could first find only two additional "Singing My Cares," to which he later added three more in a supplement. His bibliographical note speaks of a manuscript version with thirteen, in which he found the two that were not in the *Wen xuan*; later he saw a printed edition, from which he got three more.[11]

The collection resurfaced about a century and a half later, and here we enter the dark byways of Chinese bibliography. We have a 1513 preface by the famous scholar Li Mengyang 李夢陽 (1472–1529), who had a manuscript version of Ruan Ji's poems (*shi*) and was preparing it for an imprint. We should note that the preface does not itself indicate the date: the 1513 date is given in the Qing bibliography *Tianyige shumu* 天一閣書目 (1808); the 1513 date is presumably from the date of the imprint in the Tianyige Library. We do have a Ming edition with Li Mengyang's often reprinted preface. I have not seen the original, and it is impossible to know if it is the edition for which Li Mengyang prepared his preface or a subsequent edition that was reprinted with the preface.

This leaves us with some interesting problems. Li Mengyang speaks only of a manuscript of "Singing My Cares," with no reference to the prose or poetic expositions. By 1543 we have Chen Dewen 陳德文 writing a preface for an edition prepared by Fan Qin 范欽, ostensibly making a northern (Daliang 大梁, modern Kaifeng of He'nan) edition available

11 *Fengya yi* (*Siku quanshu* edition), 10.19a–19b. The question here is whether Liu Lü only selected three additional pieces from a full printed version or whether these were the only three poems available from some work "in print." Judging from the character of Liu Lü's anthology, it seems highly unlikely that he would have chosen only three additional pieces if all eighty-two poems were available. We might note here Liu Jie's 劉節 (*jinshi* 1505) *Guang Wen xuan* 廣文選. Liu Jie could find only nineteen more than *Wen xuan*'s seventeen, including only two of the five found by Liu Lü. The point here is that these texts were very hard to find, even in the early sixteenth century.

in the south. This collection includes the prose. This may have been—or was believed to have been—a Northern Song Kaifeng edition.[12] This is the text that served as the basis of *Ruan Ji ji* 阮籍集, collated and punctuated by Li Zhijun 李志鈞, Ji Changhua 季昌華, Chai Yuying 柴玉英, and Peng Dahua 彭大華 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978).

This tells us with some sense of security that there were at least two sources for the proliferation of Ruan Ji editions in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries—though perhaps based on a single source (see below). Li Mengyang states that his source was filled with lacunae and wrong characters, and the textual problems in the Fan Qin/Chen Dewen edition are obvious. If there were other sources, we have no note of them (I disregard late sixteenth century and seventeenth century claims to have a new source edition). In the absence of better evidence, we can tentatively conclude that subsequent editions in the Ming are working with these two sources.

There are indications that ultimately there was only a single source for all the editions. We cannot recover such a source text, but we have every reason to believe that its poor quality invited the conjectures and emendations it received. In line eight of "Singing My Cares" 21, the Fan Qin edition reads *chun qiu biao wei guang* 春秋表微光; other early editions read *san chun biao wei guang* 三春表微光. As with some other interesting variants, this strongly suggests an original source text that read *chun biao wei guang* 春表微光, with an unmarked lacuna in the first hemistich of the line. The two readings offer different conjectures on how to plausibly repair the same damaged line, one with a character added before *chun* 春, and the other with a character added after *chun*.

Subsequent sixteenth-century Ming editions introduce a significant number of new readings, many of which matter a great deal in understanding the text. We have to suspect that many of these new variants represent infamous "Ming editing," solving problems by changing words on no scholarly basis. Here I need to note the *Liuchao shishi* 六朝詩集 edition of Ruan Ji's poems and poetic expositions from 1543, the same

12 This claim seems unlikely because there weren't many Northern Song printed editions of pre-Tang literature; and, apart from Tao Qian, there was very little Song interest in pre-Tang poetry until the thirteenth century. Chen Dewen's preface does suggest an older printed edition. Its provenance and basis are most uncertain. It is the only known source for the texts of the prose and poetic expositions, and textually these are highly problematic.

year as the Fan Qin/Chen Dewen edition. The overall collection has a 1543 preface by Xue Yingqi 薛應旂 (1500–1575). Although *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書, a recent series of reprints of early editions, considers the general compiler unknown, Xue's name has stuck with the editions in the series. For convenience I refer to this as the "Xue Yingqi edition," though Xue Yingqi should not be held responsible. While I cite many significant early variants, I generally disregard those in the "Xue Yingqi edition"; they almost always offer a *lectio facilior* and are not credible solutions to the textual problems.

After the Li Mengyang edition, the next "event" is the *Han Wei shiji* 漢魏詩集, dated to 1517. This can be found, with its date, in the *Zhongguo guji shanben shumu* 中國古籍善本書目 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1996), with no indication of where it is. In his preface to *Ruan Ji ji*, Li Zhijun takes this as the basis of the edition by Fan Qin and further edited by Chen Dewen. I doubt this: a "*Han Wei shiji*" ("Han and Wei Poetry Collection") would have only the classical poems, as Li Mengyang had, perhaps with the poetic expositions as well; Fan Qin's version was the collection with its substantial corpus of prose in addition to its poetry.

Late sixteenth and early seventeenth century editions need be taken less seriously. They seem often to be solving problems by random emendation.

In Additional Notes I give the Li Zhijun sequence number and page number first. Li basically follows the Fan Qin/Chen Dewen text, accepting alternative reading when they seem obvious. Chen Bojun 陳伯君 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987) offers a very eclectic text, militantly so as he explains in the preface. He asks us to believe that he knows what he is doing. But he often chooses the Xue Yingqi text, and worse still, the much later Ji Pu 及樸 edition of 1623 that generally follows, but sometimes emends, the Xue text. I feel on more secure ground with Li Zhijun and his generally more thoughtful choices among alternatives. Chen Bojun, however, has a very good sense of tradition, and, in a text with a lacuna, can recognize a *Shujing* (*Classic of Documents*) quotation that makes everything clear. Guo Guang often sees things that Chen Bojun did not, and so is a valuable supplement. For "Singing My Cares" I have included Jin Jicang as an example of the many commentaries on the series, more often displaying their ingenuity in identifying the hypothetical circumstances of composition than understanding usage. I also

note the older commentary by Huang Jie, which solved many of the basic problems for later commentators.

One of the most striking characteristics of the Ruan Ji text is that it retains many of the characteristics of a medieval manuscript. Radicals are freely dropped, as they often were in copying (leading to bizarre interpretations). Once we understand that "red" (*zhu* 朱) slippers may be "pearl" (*zhu* 珠) slippers, a phrase that is peculiar in context can make perfect sense.

The Translations and Conventions

As we have seen in the discussion above and will be amply clear in the poems themselves, there is an intensity and pointedness in many of the poems that led to an evolving set of commentarial questions, beginning with "What in the world is he talking about?" and eventually becoming "What is he referring to 'in the world'?" Too often a prior commentarial decision regarding the political context of a poem ("What he is referring to 'in the world' ") returns to shape the way in which the language of the poem is to be understood—sometimes distorting a natural reading. In the current translation I have tried to stay close to the natural sense of the words, even if it leaves the line obscure: to some extent this restores the experience of earlier readers like Yan Yanzhi and Li Shan ("What in the world is he talking about?").

There have been earlier translations of "Singing My Cares." The best scholarly translation and study remains Donald Holzman's 1976 *Poetry and Politics: The Life and Works of Juan Chi A.D. 210–263*, though I often differ from his work in textual matters and translation. Holzman translates the prose as well as the poems and poetic expositions, with detailed scholarly notes. Holzman is an ardent adherent of Ruan Ji as a Wei "loyalist" (he has a table of names entitled "The Wei emperors and the Ssu-ma usurpers"), but he is more restrained than many Chinese commentaries in his attempt to specify the political situation behind the poem.

"Singing My Cares" are given in the order they appear in the Fan Qin/Chen Dewen edition. For convenience I have also given the number used by most modern editions in Roman numerals in parentheses. Since it does not put all the *Wen xuan* selections together at the beginning, it

is tempting to take the Fan Qin edition as the original order, but the Xue Yingqi edition offers yet a third sequence. I have largely followed Li Zhijun's text of the Fan Qin/Chen Dewen edition, though I have sometimes taken the reading in other editions. Once we leave the *Wen xuan* selection of "Singing My Cares," we enter a world of sixteenth-century conjecture and emendation.

Basic annotation for readers is given in footnotes. Sources, textual variants, and scholarly issues are to be found in Additional Notes at the end of the volume. For early sources and reprints of those sources, I give the number of the fascicle (*juan*) rather than a page number. Such works have been often reprinted and will continue to be reprinted, both in photoreprints and typeset texts. Though it takes some time to locate a work in a fascicle, it is far easier than trying to find a specific reprint now long out of print for the correct page number. For modern works I give page numbers.

The difficulty of most poetic expositions is merely a matter of tedium: identifying some thing, place, event, or source from the rich textual record. Some of Ruan Ji's poetic expositions—and parts of some in particular—are a matter of guesswork. This is due to a variety of reasons. A devotee of "arcane learning," Ruan Ji sometimes "takes flight" and tries to represent that elusive world. The representations themselves are linguistically elusive. A large section of "The Poetic Exposition on Dongping" and "The Poetic Exposition on Purifying My Longings" are in "arcane" discourse, with spirit journeys through the cosmos and seeking the [divine] woman with deep roots in the *Chuci* and earlier poetic expositions. These are done in a diction that was originally designed more to hazily suggest what was happening than to describe it clearly (which would not be "arcane").

Another reason for the difficulty of Ruan's poetic expositions has to do with the history of the literary language. New compounds and extended usages were being introduced in profusion in Ruan Ji's age. Most of these did not survive in general usage. Some of Ruan Ji's poetic expositions have an inordinate number of unique compounds. While unique compounds are not infrequent in other poetic expositions, the scholar who knows how to work with the record can usually understand them by clear parallels. All too often in parts of Ruan Ji's poetic expositions, however, the scholar is left shaking his head in uncertainty.

Compounding these difficulties, we can be reasonably certain that we do not always have the poetic expositions as Ruan Ji wrote them. The very difficult sections would probably have been difficult even if we had them as Ruan Ji wrote them—but we might have been able to understand them better than we now can. First, they went through well over a millennium of serial recopying by copyists and aficionados who had no idea what he meant, copyists to whom this discourse was utterly alien. A copyist who copies what he cannot understand tends to make mistakes, and those mistakes are multiplied by the next copyist. There may have been print versions in the Southern Song (1127–1279), but they were based on the manuscript tradition and returned to it.

詠懷

1 (I)

夜中不能寐,
起坐彈鳴琴。
薄帷鑒明月,
清風吹我襟。
孤鴻號外野,
翔鳥鳴北林。
徘徊將何見,
憂思獨傷心。

2 (XXXVI)

誰言萬事艱,
逍遙可終身。
臨堂翳華樹,
悠悠念無形。
彷徨思親友,
倏忽復至冥。
寄言東飛鳥,
可用慰我情。

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Singing My Cares

The Five-syllable-line Poems

1 (I)

I could not get to sleep at night,
I sat up and plucked my zither.
The thin curtain gave the image of the bright moon,
a cool breeze blew on the folds of my robes.
A lone swan cried out in the wilds,
winging birds sang in the woods to the north.
I paced about, what might I see?—
anxious thoughts wounded my heart alone.

2 (XXXVI)

Who says everything is troublesome?—
one may spend all one's days roaming free.
Looking out from my hall, I am screened by flowering trees,
on and on, I brood on formlessness.[1]
As I pace about, I think of kin and friends,
and all of a sudden it is dark again.
To send word by the bird flying east
would comfort how I feel.

1 "Formlessness" may be undifferentiated primal chaos.

3 (XXXVII)

嘉時在今辰，
零雨灑塵埃。
臨路望所思，
日夕復不來。
人情有感慨，
蕩漾焉能排。
揮涕懷哀傷，
辛酸誰語哉。

4 (II)

二妃遊江濱，
逍遙順風翔。
交甫懷環珮，
婉孌有芬芳。
猗靡情歡愛，
千載不相忘。
傾城迷下蔡，
容好結中腸。

1 The Chinese does not indicate gender.
2 The *Biographies of Immortals* (*Liexian zhuan* 列仙傳) tells of the two nymphs (or river goddesses) who roamed the shores of the Yangzi and Han River. They encountered Zheng Jiaofu, who was attracted to them but didn't know they were goddesses. He asked them for the pendants hanging from their sashes, and they gave them to him. He put them in the folds of his gown next to his heart, but going

3 (XXXVII)

The finest time is this morning now,
with falling rain sprinkling down the dust.
By the road I gaze toward the one I long for,
who by evening still has not come.[1]
Human feelings are sometimes moved strongly,
tossed along, how can we dispel them?
Wiping away tears, I harbor misery and pain,
to whom can I speak this bitterness?

4 (II)

Two nymphs roamed by the river's shore,[2]
carefree, they soared along with the wind.
Zheng Jiaofu put their pendant-rings in his bosom—
their youthful beauty lent a sweet scent.
With tender feelings, he felt love for them,
for a thousand years he would not forget them.
A city-toppler beguiled Xiacai,[3]
fairness of face ties the heart up within.

---

on a few paces, he checked for them and found they were gone. Looking around for the two nymphs, he found they too had suddenly vanished.

3 A "city-toppler" was a cliché for a dangerously beautiful woman. "Beguiled Xiacai" was how Song Yu 宋玉, in the "Poetic Exposition on Dengtu's Lechery" ("Dengtuzi haose fu" 登徒子好色賦), described the beauty of the girl who was his neighbor to the east. Xiacai was a place.

感激生憂思，
萱草樹蘭房。
膏沐為誰施，
其雨怨朝陽。
如何金石交，
一旦更離傷。

5 (III)

嘉樹下成蹊，
東園桃與李。
秋風吹飛藿，
零落從此始。
繁華有憔悴，
堂上生荊杞。
驅馬舍之去，
去上西山趾。
一身不自保，
何況戀妻子。
凝霜被野草，
歲暮亦云已。

1 The *xuancao* 萱草, translated as "herb of forgetting," supposedly made a person forget cares.

2 The last three lines echo a woman speaker in "Bo xi" 伯兮, a poem from the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經), longing for the return of her husband on campaign.

Being so stirred brings troubled thoughts,
the herb of forgetting is planted in the eupatorium chamber.[1]
For whom is hair-oil applied?—
hope for rain brings reproach for the dawn's light.[2]
How can a bond firm as metal and stone
change in one morning to separation's pain?

5 (III)

A path forms beneath fine trees,
peach and plum in the eastern garden.[3]
Then autumn wind blows the bean leaves flying,
from this point the shedding and falling begin.
Thick flowering has its time to become bedraggled,
thorny briars grow in the hall.
I galloped my horse and left, abandoning it,
I left and went up the base of West Mountain.[4]
I am unable to take care of my own person,
how much less can I dote on wife and children?
Stiff frost blankets the plants in the wilds,
and the year's twilight is done.

3 This echoes the proverb cited in "Biography of Li Guang" 李廣列傳 in Ban Gu's 班固 (32–92) *Han History* (*Han shu* 漢書): "Peach and plum do not speak, yet a path forms beneath them" 桃李不言, 下自成蹊.

4 "West Mountain" could be a reference to Bo Yi 伯夷 and Shu Qi 叔齊, who withdrew at the time of the Zhou founding in the eleventh century BCE, or it could be the Kunlun Mountains in the far west, inhabited by immortal beings.

6 (IV)

天馬出西北，
繇來從東道。
春秋非有託，
富貴焉常保。
清露被皋蘭，
凝霜霑野草。
朝為美少年，
夕暮成醜老。
自非王子晉，
誰能常美好。

7 (V)

平生少年時，
輕薄好絃歌。
西遊咸陽中，
趙李相經過。

1 The “horses of Heaven” were sent to Han Emperor Wu from the Central Asian kingdom of Dayuan after its fall to Chinese armies. The phrasing echoes the Han ritual song commemorating their arrival in the Western Han capital Chang’an.

2 This is Qiao the Prince 王子喬, who had been the Crown Prince of King Ling of Zhou (r. 571–545 BCE) and supposedly became an immortal. He is a standard figure for an immortal in third century poetry.

6 (IV)

The horses of Heaven are from the northwest,[1]
they have always followed the road eastward.
Springs and autumns have no place to stay lodged,
how can wealth and honor be kept forever?
The clear dew blankets the marsh eupatorium,
stiff frost soaks the plants in the wilds.
At dawn I was a handsome youth,
by sundown I have become ugly and old.
Unless one is Prince Jin,[2]
who can always be fine and fair?

7 (V)

As I used to be as a young man,
flighty and light-hearted, I loved songs sung to strings.
I roamed west to Xianyang[3]
and frequented the Zhaos and Lis.[4]

3 Xianyang, the capital of the Qin Empire, here stands simply for the Chang'an region, hence the Western Han, and, by extension, the capital, which was Luoyang in Ruan Ji's day.

4 The Zhaos and Lis are probably imperial favorites during the reign of Emperor Cheng of Han. This might also be taken to refer to Emperor Wu's favorite consort Lady Li and Emperor Cheng's empress Zhao Feiyan, and, by extension, the imperial in-law families who enjoyed imperial favor.

娛樂未終極,
白日忽蹉跎。
驅馬復來歸,
反顧望三河。
黃金百鎰盡,
資用常苦多。
北臨太行道,
失路將如何。

8 (VI)

昔聞東陵瓜,
近在青門外。
連畛距阡陌,
子母相鉤帶。
五色耀朝日,
嘉賓四面會。
膏火自煎熬,
多財為患害。
布衣可終身,
寵祿豈足賴。

Before my pleasures had been enjoyed to the fullest,
the bright sun suddenly slipped away.
I galloped my horse to go back home,
then turned to gaze at the Three Rivers region.
A hundred pounds of gold were gone—
the expenses were always terribly great.
Looking north on road through the Taihang Range,
what shall I do if I lose my way?

8 (VI)

I have heard of Dongling's melons long ago,
they were close outside Green Gate.[1]
Stretching to field boundaries, they reached the paths,[2]
mothers and infants, strung one to another.[3]
Multi-colored, gleaming in the dawn sun,
fine visitors converged from all around.
An oil-fed flame burns itself up,
much property is a calamity.
One may live out one's days in commoner's clothes—
favor and salary are not to be trusted.

1 After the fall of Qin, the Count of Dongling became a commoner and famous melon farmer just outside Green Gate, one of the eastern gates of the Han capital Chang'an.

2 That is, they covered the field to the edges, divided by raised paths.

3 Larger and smaller melons.

9 (VII)

炎暑惟茲夏，
三旬將欲移。
芳樹垂綠葉，
青雲自逶迤。
四時更代謝，
日月遞差馳。
徘徊空堂上，
忉怛莫我知。
願覩卒歡好，
不見悲別離。

10 (VIII)

灼灼西隤日，
餘光照我衣。
迴風吹四壁，
寒鳥相因依。
周周尚銜羽，
跫跫亦念饑。
如何當路子，
磬折忘所歸。
豈為夸與名，
憔悴使心悲。

9 (VII)

Searingly hot, this summer now
in thirty days will be ready to move on.
Fragrant trees let their green leaves hang,
blue clouds wind off on their own.
The four seasons change place in succession,
sun and moon take turns speeding by.
I pace about in my empty hall,
miserable that no one understands me.
I want to witness pleasure and joy to the end
and not encounter grief over separation.

10 (VIII)

Glowing, the westward toppling sun,
its lingering rays shine on my clothes.
Whirling gusts blow on my walls all around,
the birds huddle together against the cold.
The *zhouzhou* bird still hold feathers in its beak;[1]
the *qiongqiong* too is concerned about hunger.[2]
How is it that those in office
bow, bent like stone chimes, and forget where they're going?[3]
Why, for empty praise and fame,
should one make the heart sad, worn down?

---

1 The *zhouzhou* is a legendary bird whose head is heavier than its tail, so that, if it wants to drink, another has to hold its tail-feathers to stabilize it.

2 The *qiongqiong* is a legendary creature that can run swiftly but cannot get its own food. It lives in symbiosis with the *jue* 蹶, which can get food but cannot run.

3 Chinese stone chimes were cut at an angle.

寧與燕雀翔，
不隨黃鵠飛。
黃鵠遊四海，
中路將安歸。

11 (IX)

步出上東門，
北望首陽岑。
下有采薇士，
上有嘉樹林。
良辰在何許，
凝霜霑衣襟。
寒風振山岡，
玄雲起重陰。
鳴雁飛南征，
鶗鴂發哀音。
素質由商聲，
悽愴傷我心。

1 Of Luoyang.
2 Mount Shouyang was where Bo Yi and Shu Qi withdrew at the time of the Zhou founding, refusing to eat “the grain of Zhou.” They lived on wild beans and eventually starved to death. See note to “Singing My Cares” 5 (III).

Better to wing about with the swallows and wrens
and not to follow the yellow swan in its flight.
The yellow swan roams over the sea-girt world,
in mid-course where is it going?

11 (IX)

I walked out Upper East Gate[1]
and gazed north toward Shouyang's peak.[2]
At the foot were gentlemen picking wild beans,
above were forests of fine trees.
When will a happy time occur?—
stiff frost soaks my clothes.
Cold winds shake the hills,
black clouds raise layers of shadow.
Crying out, wild geese fly faring south,
the cuckoo gives out its mournful tones.[3]
Plain substance follows from those *shang* notes,[4]
miserably causing my heart pain.

---

3 At the autumn equinox the cuckoo's call marks the end of the season of growth.

4 *Suzhi* 素質 is the unadorned substance of things, previously "adorned" by flower and leaf. *Su* is both "plain," "unadorned," but is also "white," the color of autumn. The musical note *shang* is associated with autumn. Presumably these are the sounds of the migrating geese and the cuckoo.

12 (X)

北里多奇舞，
濮上有微音。
輕薄閑遊子，
俯仰乍浮沈。
捷徑從狹路，
僶俛趨荒淫。
焉見王子喬，
乘雲翔鄧林。
獨有延年術，
可用慰吾心。

13 (XI)

湛湛長江水，
上有楓樹林。
皋蘭被徑路，
青驪逝駸駸。
遠望令人悲，
春氣感我心。

1 The Northern Ward was a standard figure for the entertainment quarter.

2 “By the River Pu” and the “Northern Ward” were standard examples of the source of morally decadent music, the “tones of a state about to fall.”

3 In the “Li Sao” 離騷, following the “shortcut” led ancient kings to perdition: “Slovenly and scruffy were kings Jie and Zhoù; / they walked at hazard on shortcuts” 何桀紂之昌被兮，夫唯捷徑以窘步.

12 (X)

In the Northern Ward are many strange dances,[1]
by the River Pu there are languishing tones.[2]
Flighty and light-hearted, idle wanderers
bob up and down at once along with the crowd.
The shortcut leads along a narrow path,[3]
just going along, they all hurry to dissipation.
How can they see Qiao the Prince,[4]
who is riding the clouds over Deng Woods?[5]
Only techniques for prolonging my years
can comfort my heart.

13 (XI)

Deep-flowing, the Long River's waters,
above are forests of maple.
Marsh eupatorium blanket the paths,
jet-black steeds go off at a gallop.
Gazing afar makes one sad,
the spring air stirs my heart.[6]

---

4 Prince Jin the immortal. See note to "Singing My Cares" 6 (IV).

5 Deng Woods was created by Kuafu's 夸父 staff after he died of thirst trying to catch up with the sun.

6 The first six lines combine phrases from (and in some cases rephrase) lines from the coda, *luan* 亂, of "Summoning the Soul" (*Zhaohun* 招魂) in the *Chuci*.

三楚多秀士，
朝雲進荒淫。
朱華振芬芳，
高蔡相追尋。
一為黃雀哀，
涕下誰能禁。

14 (XVIII)

懸車在西南，
羲和將欲傾。
流光耀四海，
忽忽至夕冥。
朝為咸池暉，
濛汜受其榮。
豈知窮達士，
一死不再生。
視彼桃李花，
誰能久熒熒。

1 The introduction to the "Poetic Exposition on Gaotang" ("Gaotang fu" 高唐賦) tells of the goddess's visit to the King of Chu at night. She left the next morning telling him, "At dawn I am the moving cloud, / at twilight I am the rain."

2 This refers to the famous speech of Zhuang Xin 莊辛 to King Xiang of Chu 楚襄王 (r. 298–263 BCE) in the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策. Zhuang Xin had tried to warn King Xiang about his behavior; and when he did not succeed, Zhuang Xin fled Chu's impending ruin. Later, the state of Qin did indeed seize many regions of Chu, and King Xiang sought an interview with Zhuang Xin. Zhuang Xin's speech

The regions of Chu had many splendid gentlemen,
the "clouds of dawn" introduced depravity.[1]
Red blossoming gives off a sweet fragrance,
at Gaocai they went after one another.
But once there was the lament for the brown sparrow,[2]
who could forbid tears from falling?

14 (XVIII)

The hanging coach is in the southwest,[3]
Xihe will soon sink down.[4]
Its flowing rays illuminated the sea-girt world,
then abruptly it comes to evening darkness.
At dawn it glowed in Xian Pool,
now Meng Shore receives its splendor.[5]
How can it know of gentlemen, whether in straits or success,
that once they die, they will never live again?
Look on the blossoms of peach and plum,
who can stay so brilliant for long?

was based on a compound analogy of creatures enjoying themselves and thinking themselves safe because of their literal or figurative height; however in each case the creature is in immediate peril. The brown sparrow was about to be shot, and Count Ling of Cai was enjoying himself at Gaocai with his concubines and favorites, just before he was taken into custody by the king of Chu.

3 The sun-coach as it draws to its resting place.

4 Xihe was the driver of the sun-coach.

5 Xian Pool and Meng Shore are the rising and setting places of the sun.

君子在何許,
歎息未合并。
瞻仰景山松,
可以慰吾情。

15 (XIX)

西方有佳人,
皎若白日光。
被服纖羅衣,
左右珮雙璜。
修容耀姿美,
順風振微芳。
登高眺所思,
舉袂當朝陽。
寄顏雲霄間,
揮袖凌虛翔。
飄颻恍惚中,
流眄顧我傍。
悅懌未交接,
晤言用感傷。

And where is the superior man?—
I sigh that I have not gotten together with him.
Peer up at the pines on Jing Mountain,[1]
they can comfort my feelings.

15 (XIX)

In the west there is a fair woman,
she gleams like the rays of the sun.
The robes that she wears are of delicate gossamer,
on either side a pair of half-circle jades hang from her waist.
Her fine features shine with a beauty of form,
she gives off a faint fragrance with the wind.
Climbing a height, she gazes toward the one she loves,
she lifts her sleeves facing the morning sunlight.
She lodges her countenance among the clouds,
waving her sleeves, she wings up over the void.
Wind-tossed in a blur,
her drifting glances turn to me.
I am overjoyed but never make contact,
talking face to face would stir pain.

---

1 A mountain in He'nan whose pines are referred to in the *Shijing* poem "Yin Wu" 殷武. The "comfort" that the poet might feel is probably from the Mao gloss on *wanwan* 丸丸, the phrase used to describe Jing Mountain's pines: they are *yizhi* 易直, "easily straight."

16 (XII)

昔日繁華子，
安陵與龍陽。
夭夭桃李花，
灼灼有輝光。
悅懌若九春，
磬折似秋霜。
流盼發姿媚，
言笑吐芬芳。
攜手等歡愛，
宿昔同衣裳。
願為雙飛鳥，
比翼共翱翔。
丹青著明誓，
永世不相忘。

17 (XIII)

登高臨四野，
北望青山阿。

16 (XII)

Fellows in their glory in bygone days,
such were Anling and Longyang.[1]
As fresh as the blossoms of peach and plum,
shimmering, they gave off a glow.
They were delightful like spring's ninety days,
they bowed, bent like stone chimes, resembling autumn frost.[2]
Their roving glances gave off beguiling charm,
their speech and laughter emitted fragrance.
Holding hands, they enjoyed equal pleasure [with their lords],
In the night they shared the same robe.
They wished to become birds flying in pairs [with their lords],
wing to wing, soaring together.
Their famous vows are written in the red and green,[3]
"For all eternity we shall not forget each other."

17 (XIII)

I climbed a height and looked out on the wilderness all around,
I gazed north to the folds of green mountains.[4]

---

1 The Lord of Anling was a male favorite of a king of Chu, and the Lord of Longyang was a male favorite of a King of Wei.

2 The "stone-chime bow" was a conventional metaphor based on the angle at which stone chimes were cut. This may suggest their servility before their respective lords.

3 That is, in books of history.

4 "Gazing north" in conjunction with the pines and cypress in the following line suggests tombs.

松柏翳岡岑，
飛鳥鳴相過。
感慨懷辛酸，
怨毒常苦多。
李公悲東門，
蘇子狹三河。
求仁自得仁，
豈復歎咨嗟。

18 (XIV)

開秋肇涼氣，
蟋蟀鳴牀帷。
感物懷殷憂，
悄悄令心悲。
多言焉所告，
繁辭將訴誰。
微風吹羅袂，
明月耀清暉。

---

1 Li Si 李斯 (d. 208 BCE), the minister of Qin Shihuang (First Emperor, r. 247–220 BCE), was executed by Qin Shihuang's successor. On his way to the execution ground, he turned to his son, also to be executed, and said, "You and I will never again get to take the yellow dog out the east gate of Shangcai and chase the crafty hare."

2 Su Qin 蘇秦, the great wandering orator of the Warring States, was a native of Luoyang, in the much reduced Eastern Zhou domain. The "Three Rivers" here

Cypress and pine hid the crests of the hills,
birds in flight sang crossing over.
Stirred strongly, I felt a bitter, sour taste,
rancor and harm are always so terribly great.
Lord Li Si was saddened at the thought of East Gate,[1]
Su Qin thought the Three Rivers region too narrow.[2]
"Seeking fellow-feeling, one finds fellow-feeling"—[3]
why should I sigh anymore?

18 (XIV)

Autumn's onset begins the cool air,
crickets sing by my bed curtain.
Moved by these things, I feel great cares,
filled with distress, it causes my heart sorrow.
Much to say, but where to vent it?
fulsome phrases, but to whom to complain?
A light breeze blows on gossamer sleeves,
the bright moon shines with a clear glow.

---

apparently refers to that region. This suggests Su Qin's decision to seek his fortune in the great domains of the Warring States. He was eventually assassinated in Qi.

3 In the *Analects* Confucius was asked his opinion of Bo Yi and Shu Qi, two ancients from the time of the Zhou conquest of Shang, who had protested King Wu's attack on Shang and withdrew to live as recluses, eventually starving to death. Confucius answered the question by saying that Bo Yi and Shi Qi were ancient sages. He was further asked if they had felt rancor, to which Confucius replied, "Seeking fellow-feeling, they found fellow-feeling; what rancor would they have had?" That is, they got what they sought.

晨雞鳴高樹，
命駕起旋歸。

19 (XV)

昔年十四五，
志尚好書詩。
被褐懷珠玉，
顏閔相與期。
開軒臨四野，
登高望所思。
丘墓蔽山岡，
萬代同一時。
千秋萬歲後，
榮名安所之。
乃悟羡門子，
噭噭今自嗤。

When the morning rooster sings high in the trees,
I will order my carriage to set off and go home.

19 (XV)

Long ago at fourteen or fifteen,
in my aspirations I loved the Poems and Documents.[1]
Wearing coarse clothes I harbored pearls and jade,
and I planned to be classed with Yan Hui and Min Sun.[2]
I opened the window and looked on the wilderness around,
I climbed a height and gazed toward those I longed for.
Mounds and tombs covered the mountains and hills,
ten thousand ages are there together in a single moment.
After a thousand or ten thousand years
where has their fame and glory gone?
Then I was enlightened by Yanmenzi,[3]
wailing, I now sneer at how I was before.

1 This refers specifically to the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing*) and *Classic of Documents* (*Shujing* 書經), but these stand for the Confucian Classics in general.

2 These are two of Confucius's disciples, cited together as exemplars of "virtuous conduct" 德行.

3 A Daoist immortal whose name means "Master Tomb Door."

20 (XVI)

徘徊蓬池上，
還顧望大梁。
綠水揚洪波，
曠野莽茫茫。
走獸交橫馳，
飛鳥相隨翔。
是時鶉火中，
日月正相望。
朔風厲嚴寒，
陰氣下微霜。
羈旅無儔匹，
俛仰懷哀傷。
小人計其功，
君子道其常。
豈惜終憔悴，
詠言著斯章。

---

1 Peng Pool lay to the southwest of Daliang, the capital of the Warring States kingdom of Wei—though the kingdom's name was changed to Liang when it moved to Daliang. Since Wei was also the name of the dynasty in which Ruan Ji grew up, this is one of the few "Singing My Cares" with internal evidence to make a credible case for reference to the contemporary political situation.

2 This is a reference to a passage in the early chronicle, *Zuo Tradition* (*Zuo zhuan* 左傳). In the fifth year of Duke Xi (654 BCE), the Count of Jin was attacking the small domain of Gou, and the Count asked the diviner Yan if he would be

20 (XVI)

I lingered about by Peng Pond
and turning, I gazed back toward Daliang.[1]
The green waters raised mighty waves,
the broad wilderness was a vast expanse.
Running animals rushed this way and that,
birds in flight winged after one another.
At the time the Quail Fire stars were due south,[2]
and the sun and moon were exactly opposed.[3]
The north wind was sharp with bitter cold,
Yin vapors sent down a faint frost.
On a journey without a companion,
in an instant I felt misery and pain.
The lesser man reckons his accomplishment;
the superior man take the constant as his guide.
He does not regret ending up haggard and worn,
chanting, I compose this verse.

---

successful. The diviner recited a children's verse and concluded that, with other astrological alignments, when the Quail Fire stars lay due south, at the conjunction of the ninth and tenth lunar months, he would succeed. Since Jin became the fief of Sima Zhao in 258 and lent that name to the dynasty that replaced Wei, this could suggest a contemporary reference. Jupiter in the Quail Fire stars (歲在鶉火) was also when King Wu of Zhou attacked Shang.

3 This is the fifteenth of a lunar month, the full moon. This contradicts the time of the month divined in the preceding line.

21 (XLIV)

儔物終始殊，
修短各異方。
琅玕生高山，
芝英耀朱堂。
熒熒桃李花，
成蹊將夭傷。
焉敢希千術，
三春表微光。
自非凌風樹，
憔悴烏有常。

22 (XLV)

幽蘭不可佩，
朱草為誰榮。
修竹隱山陰，
射干臨增城。

---

1 That is, peach and plum, whose flowering is short-lived, may draw enough interested viewers to make a path; but they are no match for the larger and more enduring things. The underlined words mark a Ming editorial intervention to fill a lacuna in the text (see Additional Notes).

2 The conventional examples of such trees are pines and cypresses, evergreens that endure winter's cold.

3 This is from the "Li Sao" and represents the opinion of "men of faction" in a court where values are upside-down. They prefer to wear foul-smelling plants rather than the eupatorium, which has the sweetest scent of all. "What men love and loathe is

21 (XLIV)

Types of things differ in their life-courses,
long-lived and short-lived are each separate ways.
The *langgan* tree grows in high mountains,
the budding *zhi* fungus shines in a crimson hall.
Glowing, the blossoms of peach and plum
have a path forming under them, soon to perish.
How can people expect it to be a street or avenue,
since they show but faint light in spring's third month?[1]
Not being trees to outlast the wind,[2]
they are bedraggled, nothing constant in them.

22 (XLV)

The hidden eupatorium may not be strung from the waist,[3]
for whom does the crimson plant bloom?[4]
The tall bamboo stays concealed in the mountain's shadow,
the *yegan* plant looks down from Layered Walls.[5]

---

never the same— / only these men of faction alone stand apart. / Each person wears mugwort, stuffed in their waists, / they declare that the eupatorium may never be strung from their waists" 民好惡其不同兮，惟此黨人其獨異。戶服艾以盈腰兮，謂幽蘭其不可佩.

4 The blooming of the "crimson plant" is supposed to mark a virtuous ruler.

5 The *yegan* is a legendary plant in the west with a stalk only four inches tall, but is supposed to grow only on mountaintops and look down on huge canyons. Thus its height was a function of its place rather than its size. Layered Walls is a peak in the Kunlun Mountains, where the immortals live.

葛藟延幽谷，
綿綿瓜瓞生。
樂極消靈神，
哀深傷人情。
竟知憂無益，
豈若歸太清。

23 (XX)

楊朱泣岐路，
墨子悲染絲。
揖讓長別離，
飄颻難與期。
豈徒燕婉情，
存亡誠有之。
蕭索人所悲，
禍釁不可辭。
趙女媚中山，
謙柔愈見欺。

1 The underlined words were added by a sixteenth-century editor to fill a lacuna in the text (see Additional Notes).

2 The *Liezi* 列子 has a story that the neighbor of the ancient philosopher Yang Zhu lost a sheep and was gathering a crowd to search for it. Yang Zhu asked why he needed so many people to find a single sheep, and the neighbor replied that there were many forks in the road. When the neighbor returned, Yang Zhu asked if they had found his sheep, and the neighbor replied that they had lost it. When Yang Zhu asked how they could have lost it, the neighbor explained that each fork in the road

Creeping vines spread in a secluded valley,
continuously melons grow on their stems.[1]
When pleasure reaches an extreme, it melts the spirit,
when sorrow is deep, it wounds a person's heart.
I finally realize that there is no gain from worry—
better to go off to the Supreme Purity.

23 (XX)

Yang Zhu wept at the forking of roads;[2]
Mozi grieved at the dyeing of silk.[3]
Bowing and deferring, then long separation,[4]
whirled along, we cannot expect to be together.
This is not only in tender feelings of love,[5]
indeed it happens in the living's separation from the dead.
Gloomy solitude is lamented by people,
yet occasions leading to disaster cannot be avoided.
A girl of Zhao charmed Zhongshan,
by her softness and humility he was deceived all the more.[6]

---

led to other forks and that not knowing which one to take, they gave up and came back. This left Yang Zhu depressed. The later tradition has Yang Zhu weeping.

3 The ancient philosopher Mozi commented on how plain silk could become many different colors by dyeing, so one has to be careful about how dyeing is done.

4 "Bowing and deferring" refers to the proper relations between a guest and host.

5 This implies the love between husband and wife, by the third century extended to close friendship.

6 An unknown allusion.

嗟嗟塗上士,
何用自保持。

24 (XXI)

於心懷寸陰,
羲陽將欲冥。
揮袂撫長劍,
仰觀浮雲征。
雲間有玄鶴,
抗志揚哀聲。
一飛沖青天,
曠世不再鳴。
豈與鶉鷃遊,
連翩戲中庭。

25 (XXII)

夏后乘靈輿,
夸父為鄧林。
存亡從變化,
日月有浮沈。

Alas those gentlemen on the path of service,
how can they protect themselves?

24 (XXI)

In my heart I cherish that inch of shadow,[1]
Xihe's sun is about to turn dark.
I wave my sleeves and take hold of my long sword,
looking up, I watch the drifting clouds journey on.
Among the clouds is a black crane,
setting its aims high, it raises a mournful sound.
In one flight it strikes the blue heavens,
for generations untold it will not sing again.
How could it roam about with the quail and wren,
fluttering as they sport in the yard?

25 (XXII)

Xiahou rode his numinous carriage,[2]
Kuafu made Deng Woods.[3]
Life and death follow transformations,
sun and moon float up and sink down.

1 "Inch of shadow" is "time"; i.e. "cherish the moment."

2 Xiahou Qi 夏后啟 is mentioned in the *Shanhai jing* 山海經 as driving a two-dragon chariot.

3 Kuafu raced with the sun and grew so thirsty that he drank the Wei and Yellow Rivers dry. When he died, his staff was moistened by the oils of his corpse and grew into Deng Woods.

鳳凰鳴參差，
伶倫發其音。
王子好簫管，
世世相追尋。
誰言不可見，
青鳥明我心。

26 (XLVI)

鷽鳩飛桑榆，
海鳥運天池。
豈不識宏大，
羽翼不相宜。
招搖安可翔，
不若栖樹枝。
下集蓬艾間，
上遊園圃籬。
但爾亦自足，
用子為追隨。

1 Ling Lun was the musician of the Yellow Emperor, who was sent west to cut bamboo into twelve lengths that matched the notes of phoenixes.

2 See notes to 6 (IV) and 12 (X). Qiao the Prince also played the panpipes and made the song of a phoenix.

3 The bluebird was the messenger of the Queen Mother of the West.

The phoenixes sing out in the panpipes,
Ling Lun produced their notes.[1]
The Prince loved the pipes,[2]
in every age they have sought him.
Who says he cannot be met?—
the bluebird understands my heart.[3]

26 (XLVI)

The turtle-doves fly no further than mulberry or elm,
while the seabird makes the passage to Heaven's Pool.[4]
Of course they can recognize what is vast and large,
but their wings are not suited to such.
How can they soar in the Whirlwind?—
better that they roost on the branch of a tree.
Below they alight in the undergrowth,
above they roam within the garden's hedge.
And they are satisfied in just this way,
with their young following after them.

4 This is the bird of the parable that opens "Free Wandering" ("Xiaoyao you" 逍遙遊), the first chapter of the *Zhuangzi*. The "seabird" is the great Peng 鵬 that flies from the Northern Ocean to the South Sea, "Heaven's Pool," carried aloft by the Fuyao 扶搖, the "Whirlwind" of line five. Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324) describes the Fuyao as a violent updraft. The Peng's wingspan stretches from horizon to horizon. Such immensity is incomprehensible to the turtle-doves, who flit about in the limited range of a garden.

27 (XLVII)

生命辰安在，
憂戚涕沾襟。
高鳥翔山岡，
燕雀棲下林。
青雲蔽前庭，
素琴悽我心。
崇山有鳴鶴，
豈可相追尋。

28 (XLVIII)

鳴鳩嬉庭樹，
焦明遊浮雲。
焉見孤翔鳥，
翩翩無匹羣。
死生自然理，
消散何繽紛。

27 (XLVII)

When was the moment my life began?—[1]
in care and misery, tears soak gown's fold.
High birds soar in the mountains,
sparrows and swallows roost in the woods below.
Blue clouds hide my front yard,
the plain zither saddens my heart.
On a lofty mountain a crane cries out—
how can I go seeking it?

28 (XLVIII)

The singing doves sport in the trees in my yard,
the *jiaoming* roams among drifting clouds.[2]
How could they see that bird soaring alone,
beating its wings without companions?
Death is the natural course of things,
yet the dissolution is so chaotic.

1 That is, one's fate is astrologically determined by the moment of one's birth.

2 The *jiaoming* was a mythical bird from the Western Regions resembling a phoenix.

29 (XLIX)

步遊三衢旁，
惆悵念所思。
豈為今朝見，
恍惚誠有之。
澤中生喬松，
萬世未可期。
高鳥摩天飛，
凌雲共遊嬉。
豈有孤行士，
垂涕悲故時。

30 (L)

清露為凝霜，
華草成蒿萊。
誰云君子賢，
明達安可能。
乘雲招松喬，
呼吸永矣哉。

29 (XLIX)

I walked by the crossing of a great avenue,
in depression I thought on the one I love.
How could I see her this morning?—
yet in a blur she is truly there.
A tall pine growing in a bog
cannot be met for myriad generations.[1]
The high birds fly brushing the heavens,
they roam and sport together above the clouds.
How can there be a gentleman going alone,
shedding tears, saddened about bygone days?

30 (L)

When the clear dew congeals into stiff frost,
the flowering plants turn into withered stalks.
Who says that a worthy gentleman
having perfect comprehension can bear it?[2]
Riding clouds, I will hail Red Pine and Qiao the Prince,[3]
inhaling, exhaling forever and ever.[4]

1 That is, pines are supposed to grow on a mountain.

2 That is, how can he bear realizing that he will wither and die like the flowering plants?

3 Famous immortals.

4 That is, practicing Daoist breath regimen.

31 (LI)

丹心失恩澤，
重德喪所宜。
善言焉可長，
慈惠未易施。
不見南飛鷰，
羽翼正差池。
高子怨新詩，
三閭悼乖離。
何為混沌氏，
倏忽體貌隳。

32 (LII)

十日出暘谷，
弭節馳萬里。
遙天耀四海，
倏忽潛濛汜。

1 The reference is to Gaozi's comment on the *Shijing* poem "Xiaobian" 小弁 in *Mencius* 6B. "Xiaobian" in the canonical Mao interpretation is the lament of the heir apparent of King You of Zhou 周幽王 (r. 781–771), who was slandered and degraded after King You became infatuated with Bao Si. Mencius was told that Gaozi believed "Xiaobian" to be the poem of a "lesser man," *xiaoren* 小人. When Mencius asked why, he was told that it was because the poem "expresses resentment," *yuan* 怨. Mencius then scoffed at Gaozi's understanding, explaining that the extreme distress of the poem was precisely because the king was his father and therefore it *qinqin* 親親, "treats kin as kin."

31 (LI)

The loyal heart falls from favor and grace,
great virtue loses its due.
How can words of goodness last long?—
acts of kindness are not easy to bestow.
Have you not seen the swallows flying south,
their wings now irregularly spread?
Gaozi found the poem on kin resentful,[1]
the Lord of the Three Clans grieved over estrangement.[2]
Why did Mr. Undifferentiation
have his body ruined by "All of A" and "Sudden?"[3]

32 (LII)

Ten suns rose from Yang Valley,[4]
then steadied their pace and sped ten thousand leagues.
Far in the heavens, they lit the sea-girt world,
then in a flash, they went under into Meng Shore.[5]

2 Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 343–ca. 278 BCE), to whom the "Li sao" was attributed, was the "Lord of the Three Clans," and was also slandered and exiled.

3 This refers to the parable in the *Zhuangzi* in which allegorical figures "All of A" and "Sudden," the respective emperors of the North and the South, repay the kindness of Undifferentiation, the emperor of the Center, by boring apertures for the senses, after which Undifferentiation dies.

4 According to an old myth there were once ten suns.

5 Meng Shore is where the sun sets.

誰言焱炎久，
遊沒何行□。
逝者豈長生，
亦去荊與杞。
千歲猶崇朝，
一餐聊自已。
是非得失間，
焉足相譏理。
計利知術窮，
哀情遽能止。

33 (XXIII)

東南有射山，
汾水出其陽。
六龍服氣輿，
雲蓋覆天綱。
仙者四五人，
逍遙晏蘭房。
寢息一純和，
呼吸成露霜。

Who claims that their fiery heat lasted long?
in roaming and setting, how they kept going on . . . !
Those who have passed on have not lived forever,
they too have gone off to brambles and briars.
A thousand years is like but a morning,
one meal, and in a while it's over.
Between right and wrong or gain and loss
what use to argue with one another about the truth?
Reckon the gain, and you'll know your skill's limits,
then at once you can stop feelings of sorrow.

33 (XXIII)

To the southeast is Mount Guye,[1]
the Fen's waters come forth by its southern slopes.
Six dragons are yoked to a coach of vapors,
its cloud canopy covers Heaven's Net.
Four or five of the Undying
roam freely, at ease in eupatorium chambers.
Their rest is utterly pure and calm,
inhaling and exhaling produce dew and frost.

1 In "Xiaoyao you" of the *Zhuangzi*, there is a godlike being (*shenren* 神人) who dwells on Mount Guye, lives on air and dew and drives flying dragons that carry him beyond this world. Later in the same chapter the Sage-King Yao visited the "Four Masters" on Mount Guye by the Fen River and in his abstraction forgot about the world.

沐浴丹淵中，
炤耀日月光。
豈安通靈臺，
遊瀁去高翔。

34 (LIII)

自然有成理，
生死道無常。
智巧萬端出，
大要不易方。
如何夸毗子，
作色懷驕腸。
乘軒驅良馬，
憑几向膏粱。
被服纖羅衣，
深榭設閑房。
不見日夕華，
翩翩飛路傍。

They bathe in the Cinnabar Abyss,[1]
they gleam in the rays of sun and moon.
How can I be at rest on the Terrace for Reaching the Divine?[2]
drifting along, I go off, soaring on high.

34 (LIII)

The Course of Things has an established principle:
nothing is constant in the Way of life and death.[3]
From the canny and clever ten thousand devices emerge,
yet this Great Essential does not alter direction.
How is it that unctuous toadies
give stern looks, feeling so arrogant?
They ride fine coaches and drive good horses,
or lean on their armrests, facing fatty foods and fine grain.
They clothe themselves in robes of delicate gossamer,
in a deep-set kiosks, they have a room set aside for idle pleasures.
Do they not see the blooms by evening,
how they flutter, falling by the roadside?

1 Where the moon rises.

2 This is where Emperor Wu of Han got news from the Queen Mother of the West, a goddess.

3 There are various ways to interpret this couplet. With a colon, as above, the uncertainty about dying is itself an established principle. The second line could also begin with a "but."

35 (XXIV)

殷憂令志結，
怵惕常若驚。
逍遙未終晏，
朱暉忽西傾。
蟋蟀在戶牖，
蟪蛄號中庭。
心腸未相好，
誰云亮我情。
願為雲間鳥，
千里一哀鳴。
三芝延瀛洲，
遠遊可長生。

36 (LIV)

夸談快憤懣，
惰慵發煩心。
西北登不周，
東南望鄧林。

35 (XXIV)

Great cares knot up my sense of purpose,
I am anxious and worried, as if ever in alarm.
My free roaming had not come to an end
when the crimson glow suddenly sank westward.
There are crickets at the door and window,[1]
huigu cicadas sing out in the yard.
My heart has not yet found someone I love,
who can understand what I feel?
I wish I were a bird in the clouds,
singing out mournfully every thousand leagues.
The threefold fungus extends over Yingzhou;[2]
by far roaming I can live forever.

36 (LIV)

Boastful talk vents pent-up troubles,
to be lazy and indolent irritates the heart.
To the northwest I climb Mount Buzhou,[3]
and gaze to Deng Woods to the southeast.[4]

---

1 A sign of autumn.

2 The *zhi* fungus is supposed to extend life. Yingzhou is an isle inhabited by immortals.

3 Mount Buzhou is supposed to lie northeast of the Kunlun Mountains. Qu Yuan passed it in his heavenly journey in the "Li Sao."

4 See note to 12 (X).

曠野彌九州，
崇山抗高岑。
一餐度萬世，
千歲再浮沈。
誰云玉石同，
淚下不能禁。

37 (LV)

人言願延年，
延年欲焉之。
黃鵠呼子安，
千秋未可期。
獨坐山巖中，
惻愴懷所思。
王子亦何好，
猗靡相攜持。
悅懌猶今辰，
計校在一時。
置此明朝事，
日夕將見欺。

Broad wilderness spreads throughout the nine regions,
lofty mountains upraise their high peaks.
In the time of a meal I pass myriad generations,
in a thousand years things sink and rise again.
Who claims that jade and mere stone are the same?—
tears fall and I cannot prevent them.

37 (LV)

Everyone says that they wish to live longer,
but if they live longer, where will they go?
The yellow swan cries out "Zi'an,"[1]
a thousand autumns cannot be hoped for.
I sit alone among the cliffs,
in deep despair thinking of the one I yearn for.
And what did the Prince love?—[2]
with tender affection he held another's hand.
So pleasing, even to now,
but dispute can occur in a moment.
Set aside things you would do tomorrow—
by this evening you will find yourself deceived.

---

1 One Ziming was fishing and caught a white dragon, who took him up Lingyang Mountain where he became an immortal. A century later he called down to have someone come halfway up the mountain. A certain Zi'an tried to fish in the same spot and twenty years later died at the foot of the mountain. A yellow crane later perched on the tree by his grave, calling out "Zi'an." The legend first appears in the *Liexian zhuan* and again later in the *Shuijing zhu*, compiled three centuries after Ruan. The "swan," *hu* 鵠, should probably be a crane, *he* 鶴.

2 This is Qiao the Prince.

38 (XXV)

拔劍臨白刃，
安能相中傷。
但畏工言子，
稱我三江旁。
飛泉流玉山，
懸車栖扶桑。
日月徑千里，
素風發微霜。
勢路自窮達，
咨嗟安可長。

39 (LVI)

貴賤在天命，
窮達自有時。
婉孌佞邪子，
隨利來相欺。
孤恩損惠施，
但為讒夫嗤。
鶺鴒鳴雲中，
載飛靡所期。
焉知傾側士，
一旦不可持。

38 (XXV)

I draw my sword and look down on the bare blade—
how can that strike and wound you?
I dread only that those good at words
will speak of me beside Three Rivers.
The waterfall flows off Jade Mountain,[1]
the hanging coach perches on Fusang.[2]
Sun and moon cut straight across a thousand leagues,
the pale autumn wind brings a faint frost.
Success and failure occur on the paths of power;
I sigh—how can one last long there?

39 (LVI)

Of high degree or low is as Heaven ordains,
desperate straits and success each has its time.
Languidly charming are the wicked,
they will deceive you according to their advantage.
Betraying kindness, or demurring at the bestowal of grace—
such acts will only be mocked by slanderers.
The wagtails sing in the clouds
and keep flying without any plan to meet.
How would they know that the crooked man
would suddenly one day not be able to hold out?

---

1 Probably referring to the Kunlun Mountains in the West, an abode of immortals.
2 The "hanging coach" is the sun, and the legendary Fusang Tree is where the sun rises.

40 (LVII)

驚風振四野,
迴雲蔭堂除。
床帷為誰設,
几杖為誰扶。
雖非明君子,
豈闇桑與榆。
世有此聾聵,
芒芒將焉如。
翩翩從風飛,
悠悠去故居。
離靡玉山下,
遺棄毀與譽。

41 (XXVI)

朝登洪坡顛,
日夕望西山。
荊棘被原野,
群鳥飛翩翩。
鸞鷖特栖宿,
性命有自然。

40 (LVII)

Blasting winds shake the wilderness all around,
whirling clouds shadow the stair to the hall.
For whom has the bed curtain been hung?
for whom will armrest and staff lend support?
Even if you are no wise gentleman,
how can you not know of the mulberry and elm?[1]
There are in our age those deaf and with eyesight failing,
in a vast blur where will they go?
Beating wings, I fly along with the wind,
I leave my old dwelling far off behind.
Winding away to the foot of Jade Mountain,
I leave behind both calumny and praise.

41 (XXVI)

At dawn I climbed to the top of a mighty slope,
as evening fell, I gazed on the western mountains.[2]
Briars blanket the wild plain,
flocks of birds fly beating their wings.
The *luan* phoenix roosts apart for the night,
it is following the dictates of its nature.

1 The sun setting in mulberry and elm was a standard figure for the end of life.
2 Perhaps the Kunlun Mountains of the immortals.

建木誰能近,
射干復嬋娟。
不見林中葛,
延蔓相勾連。

42 (LVIII)

危冠切浮雲,
長劍出天外。
細故何足慮,
高度跨一世。
非子為我御,
逍遙遊荒裔。
顧謝西王母,
吾將從此逝。
豈與蓬戶士,
彈琴誦言誓。

Who can draw near to the Jian Tree?—[1]
the *yegan* is also charming and lovely.[2]
Have you not seen the kudzu in the woods,
spreading out, but all connected together?

42 (LVIII)

My towering cap touches the drifting clouds,[3]
my long sword sticks forth beyond the heavens.
Minor issues are not worth concern,
passing on high, I stride across the whole age.
Feizi is my carriage driver,[4]
free and easy, I roam at the wilderness's edge.
Looking back, I take leave of the Queen Mother,[5]
from this point on I will go off.
How can I join the gentlemen in a thatched house,
plucking a zither and reciting mutual pledges?

1 A mythical tree on Duguang Mountain, linking Heaven and Earth, where deities ascend and descend.
2 See note to 22 (XLV).
3 This echoes Qu Yuan's self-description in the "Li Sao."
4 A famous master of horses in antiquity.
5 The Queen Mother of the West, a goddess.

43 (XXVII)

周鄭天下交，
街術當三河。
妖冶閑都子，
英耀何芬葩。
玄髮發朱顏，
睇眄有光華。
傾城思一顧，
遺視來相誇。
願為三春遊，
朝陽忽蹉跎。
盛衰在須臾，
離別將如何。

44 (LIX)

河上有丈人，
緯蕭棄明珠。
甘彼藜藿食，
樂是蓬蒿廬。
豈效繽紛子，
良馬騁輕輿。

43 (XXVII)

Zhou and Zheng are the world's crossroads,
their roads connect the three Rivers provinces.
Seductive are the charming and fulsome girls,
they glow in such full bloom!
Black hair illuminates rosy complexions,
there is a sparkling in sidelong glances.
I yearn for one look from such a city-toppler,
I would boast of her longing gaze.
I wish to rove with her all spring long,
but the dawn sunlight will suddenly slip away.
Ruin follows splendor in an instant,
and how would separation be?

44 (LIX)

There once was a householder by the River,
a weaver of artemisia fiber, who cast a fine pearl away.[1]
He liked his food of pigweed and wild beans,
he took pleasure in his thatched cottage.
He would never ape those fellows who go in a crowd,
whose fine horses draw light coaches at a gallop.

1 This story comes from the "Lie Yukou" chapter of *Zhuangzi*. A boy from a poor family was diving and found a priceless pearl. When he told his father, the father told him to smash the pearl, explaining that it came from the black dragon, who must have been sleeping at the time. If the dragon had been awake, there would be nothing left of the boy.

朝生衢路旁，
夕瘞橫街隅。
歡笑不終晏，
俛仰復欷歔。
鑒茲二三者，
憤懣從此舒。

45 (LX)

儒者通六藝，
立志不可干。
違禮不為動，
非法不肯言。
渴飲清泉流，
饑食並一簞。
歲時無以祀，
衣服常苦寒。
屣履詠南風，
縕袍笑華軒。
信道守詩書，
義不受一餐。
烈烈褒貶辭，
老氏用長歎。

At dawn they are born beside the highway,
at dusk they are buried at the crossroad's corner.
Before their laughter and pleasure are done,
in an instant they are heaving sighs.
I take a lesson from those whose whims keep changing,
from that point on my pent-up cares relax.

45 (LX)

The scholar is versed in the Six Classics,
his sense of purpose is fixed, it may not be opposed.
He will not make any motion contrary to rites,
he won't speak if not according to the rules.
Thirsty, he drinks from the clear stream's current;
hungry, he eats one tray of food for two days.
He has nothing with which to make seasonal offerings,
his clothing always leaves him suffering from the cold.
His slippers awry, he chants "Southern Wind,"[1]
in a hemp-padded gown he mocks splendid coaches.[2]
Trusting in the Way, he holds to the *Poems* and *Documents*,
his sense of right may keep him from accepting a single meal.
Fierce are his phrases of censure and praise—
for such as him Laozi gave a long sigh.

1 Wearing slippers awry suggests hurrying. "Southern Wind" was a song by the sage-king Shun.

2 The hemp-padded gown marked poverty.

46 (XVII)

獨坐空堂上，
誰可與歡者。
出門臨永路，
不見行車馬。
登高望九州，
悠悠分曠野。
孤鳥西北飛，
離獸東南下。
日暮思親友，
晤言用自寫。

47 (LXI)

少年學擊刺，
妙伎過曲成。
英風截雲霓，
超世發奇聲。
揮劍臨沙漠，
飲馬九野坰。
旗幟何翩翩，
但聞金鼓鳴。

46 (XVII)

I sat alone in the empty hall,
who would join me in pleasure?
I went out the gate and looked out on the long road
and saw no carriages or horses passing.
I climbed a height and gazed at the Nine Regions,
I made out the broad wilderness stretching on and on.
A lone bird flew to the northwest,
a stray animal came down to the southeast.
At sunset I thought on friends and kin,
by talking face to face I would express myself.

47 (LXI)

In my younger years I studied swordsmanship,
my fine skills surpassed the Count of Qucheng.[1]
My splendid manner split rainbows,
and I had rare renown, surpassing all in that age.
I wielded my sword looking out on the desert
and watered my horse in remote regions all around.
How our flags flapped in the breeze!—
and one heard only the sound of chimes and drums.

1 A famous swordsman of antiquity.

軍旅令人悲，
烈烈有哀情。
念我平常時，
悔恨從此生。

48 (XXXVIII)

炎光延萬里，
洪川蕩湍瀨。
彎弓掛扶桑，
長劍倚天外。
泰山為砥礪，
黃河為裳帶。
視彼莊周子，
榮枯何足賴。
損身棄中野，
烏鳶作患害。
豈若雄傑士，
功名從此大。

Yet army campaigns make a person sad,
and feelings of sorrow blaze within.
When I considered how I had spent my life,
bitter regret arose from that moment on.

48 (XXXVIII)

The blazing light extends over thousands of leagues,
the mighty river sweeps through swirls and rapids.
My bent bow is hung from the Fusang Tree,[1]
my long sword rests beyond the horizon.
Mount Tai is my whetstone,
the Yellow River is the sash of my gown.
I turn to consider Master Zhuang Zhou,
neither flourishing nor withering could be trusted.
His body perished and was left in the wilds
where ravens and kites worked it harm.[2]
How can he equal the manly warrior
whose deeds and fame become great thereby?

1 The Fusang Tree is where the sun rises.

2 This refers to a poetic exposition by the Eastern Han writer Zhang Heng 張衡 (78–139) on “The Skeleton” (or “skull”). The speaker finds a skull in the wilderness, addresses it, and it answers back, saying that he is Zhuang Zhou (Zhuangzi) and prefers death to life. A piece of poetic prose attributed to Cao Zhi is on the same theme. Both are based on Zhuang Zhou’s own encounter with a skeleton in the *Zhuangzi*.

49 (LXII)

平晝整衣冠,
思見客與賓。
賓客者誰子,
倏忽若飛塵。
裳衣佩雲氣,
言語究靈神。
須臾相背棄,
何時見斯人。

50 (LXIII)

多慮令志散,
寂寞使心憂。
翱翔觀陂澤,
撫劍登輕舟。
但願長閑暇,
後歲復來遊。

49 (LXII)

When the sun was high I straightened my cap and clothes,
looking forward to meeting visitors and guests.
But who are those visitors and guests?—
they are as fleeting as the blowing dust.
Cloud vapors are strung from their waists,
their discourse delves into the spirits and gods.
In an instant they abandon me—
when again shall I meet such men as these?

50 (LXIII)

Much brooding dissipates one's sense of purpose,
lonely silence makes the heart worry.
Roaming about, I view lake and marsh,
clasping a sword, I mount a light boat.
I wish only to be forever at ease,
in later years I will roam here again.

51 (LXIV)

朝出上東門，
遙望首陽基。
松柏鬱森沈，
鸝黃相與嬉。
逍遙九曲間，
徘徊欲何之。
念我平居時，
鬱然思妖姬。

52 (LXV)

王子十五年，
遊衍伊洛濱。
朱顏茂春華，
辯慧懷清真。
焉見浮丘公，
舉手謝世人。
輕蕩易恍惚，
飄颻棄其身。
飛飛鳴且翔，
揮翼且酸辛。

51 (LXIV)

At dawn I went out Upper East Gate
and gazed on the foot of Mount Shouyang afar.
The pines and cypresses were thick and dark,[1]
and orioles joined together in sporting.
I roamed freely among the Nine Bends,
then hesitated—where might I go?
Brooding on how it used to be,
my feelings swell, thinking of the Enchantress.[2]

52 (LXV)

The Prince at fifteen years
wandered at leisure on the shores of the Yi and Luo.[3]
His ruddy complexion flourished like spring blooming,
clever at argument, he cherished the pure and genuine.
How could he meet Master Hill Adrift,
raising his hand in farewell to the people of his day?
Swept lightly along, he easily became a blur,
and wind-tossed he left his body behind.
Flying on, he sang and soared,
beating wings he felt sharp bitterness.

1 The pines and cypresses indicate a burial ground.
2 The identification of the "Enchantress" is a matter of pure speculation.
3 This is the immortal Qiao the Prince, Prince Jin of the Zhou.

53 (XXXIX)

壯士何慷慨,
志欲威八荒。
驅車遠行役,
受命念自忘。
良弓挾烏號,
明甲有精光。
臨難不顧生,
身死魂飛揚。
豈為全軀士,
效命爭戰場。
忠為百世榮,
義使令名彰。
垂聲謝後世,
氣節故有常。

54 (LXVI)

塞門不可出,
海水焉可浮。
朱明不相見,
奄昧獨無侯。

53 (XXXIX)

How full of feeling is the bold warrior!—
his aims are to overawe the wilds in all directions.
He drives his carriage on far campaign,
receiving his orders, he broods on forgetting concern for self.
Of fine bows he carries Ravenscreech,
his bright armor gives off sparkling light.
In danger he takes no heed for his life;
the body dies, the soul soars aloft.
How could he be one of those gentlemen who stays unharmed?—
he sacrifices his life on the battlefield.
His loyalty will be glorious for a hundred generations,
his sense of right makes his good name famous.
His reputation will be passed down to later generations,
his spirit and principles truly are constant.

54 (LXVI)

One may not go forth from the gate of the pass;[1]
how can one go sail on the sea's waters?[2]
In the light of the red sun I do not see them,
darkness, vision failing, alone without a target.

---

1 This may refer to Laozi going westward out from the barrier pass. He left his book, now known as *Laozi*, with the keeper of the barrier gate.

2 In the *Analects* Confucius sighed that he wanted to go sailing the sea (eastward) on a raft because the Way was not in practice.

持瓜思東陵，
黄雀誠獨羞。
失勢在須臾，
帶劍上吾丘。
悼彼桑林子，
涕下自交流。
假乘汧渭間，
鞍馬去行遊。

55 (LXVII)

洪生資制度，
被服正有常。
尊卑設次序，
事物齊紀綱。
容飾整顏色，
磬折執圭璋。
堂上置玄酒，
室中盛稻粱。
外厲貞素談，
戶內滅芬芳。

1 See note to 8 (VI).
2 See note to 13 (XI).
3 The *Han Wu gushi* tells that after Han Emperor Wu's death his spirit appeared to the custodian of his tomb mound and said, "Though I have lost power, I am still your

Taking melon in hand, I think on the Count of Dongling,[1]
the brown sparrow truly makes me feel singular shame.[2]
Power's loss can occur in an instant,
wearing their swords they ascend my mound.[3]
I lament that fellow in the mulberry grove,
tears fall, streaming crisscross.[4]
I will borrow a carriage around the Jian and Wei,
and with saddled horse, go off roaming.

55 (LXVII)

Grand scholars depend on rules and measures,
there are norms of correctness in the clothes they wear.
The exalted and humble are positioned in order,
in all matters they match the governing standard.
Adorned in finery, they compose their countenance,
they bow, bent like stone chimes, holding plaques of jade.
In the great hall they set out plain water,[5]
while fine grain abounds in their inner chambers.
In public they discourse on purity and simplicity,
in their homes they obliterate all that is sweet.

---

ruler. How can you let the soldiers climb my mound to sharpen their swords?!" The stones on the tomb mound were evidently very good as whetstones.

4 See Additional Notes.

5 "Plain water," literally "mysterious or dark ale," was used in ancient Confucian rituals. Kong Yingda takes *xuan* here as "dark-colored," not "mysterious."

放口從衷出，
復說道義方。
委曲周旋儀，
姿態愁我腸。

56 (XXVIII)

若木耀西海，
扶桑翳瀛洲。
日月經天塗，
明暗不相讎。
窮達自有常，
得失又何求。
豈效路上童，
攜手共遨遊。
陰陽有變化，
誰云沈不浮。
朱鱉躍飛泉，
夜飛過吳洲。
俛仰運天地，
再撫四海流。

They say what they please within,
but then outwardly speak of the Right and Rules.
So obsequious in their standard of ritual moves,
their manner makes my heart sore.

56 (XXVIII)

The Ruo Tree shines on the Western Sea,[1]
Fusang shades Yingzhou from sight.[2]
Sun and moon pass on their tracks through Heaven,
the light and the dark are not matched together.[3]
There are constants in failure and success,
what can one seek amid losses and gains?
How can one emulate those youths on the road
who jaunt about hand in hand?
There are transformations of Yin and Yang,
who can sink and not also float up?
The Red Turtle leaps up in the waterfall,[4]
and flies past Wuzhou by night.
In an instant it speeds over heaven and earth,
it brushes the currents of the encircling seas twice around.

1 The Ruo Tree is in the farthest west, where the sun goes down.

2 The Fusang Tree is where the sun rises. Yingzhou is one of the isles of immortals in the Eastern Ocean.

3 That is, one cannot have both together.

4 The Red [soft-shelled] Turtle is mentioned in several early sources and in one case is associated with bringing rainstorms. That function is usually associated with dragons, and the lines that follow suggests its dragon-nature.

繫累名利場,
駑駿同一輈。
豈若遺耳目,
升遐去殷憂。

57 (LXVIII)

北臨乾昧谿,
西行遊少任。
遙顧望天津,
怡蕩樂我心。
綺靡存亡門,
一遊不再尋。
儻遇晨風鳥,
飛駕出南林。
漭瀁瑤光中,
忽忽肆荒淫。
休息晏清都,
起坐復誰禁。

Tied by bonds to the realm of profit and gain,
nag and steed share the same shaft-pole.
Better to leave behind sight and hearing,
to rise up afar, escaping great cares.

57 (LXVIII)

To the north I looked down into Qianmei Valley,[1]
going west, I visited Shaoren.[2]
I turned to gaze on Heaven's Ford from afar,[3]
such joyous free movement makes my heart happy.
Sensually beguiling is the Gate of Life and Death,
I visit it once and seek it no more.
Perhaps I will encounter the dawn-wind hawk
and fly forth on it from the southern woods.
In the vast flood of crystalline light,
I speed on in wild abandon.
Then I stop to rest, at ease in the Pure Citadel,[4]
who can forbid me from acting or relaxing there?

---

1 A place mentioned in the *Shanhai jing*, located in the east and belonging more to mythic than to imperial geography.

2 Probably a place name, otherwise unknown. Its location in the west suggests a cosmic journey to the bounds of the world.

3 A constellation.

4 The dwelling place of the high god in heaven.

58 (XXIX)

昔余遊大梁，
登于黃華顛。
共工宅玄冥，
高臺造青天。
幽荒邈悠悠，
悽愴懷所憐。
所憐者誰子，
明察應自然。
應龍沈冀州，
妖女不得眠。
肆侈陵時俗，
豈云永厥年。

59 (XXX)

驅車出門去，
意欲遠征行。
征行安所如，
背棄夸與名。

1 The capital of the Warring States kingdom of Wei, known as Liang after the capital was moved to Daliang.
2 A mountain peak in the Taihang Range.
3 Gonggong was a mythical figure of high antiquity who fought with Zhuanxu to

58 (XXIX)

Once I visited Daliang[1]
and climbed to the steep edge of Huanghua Peak.[2]
Gonggong resides in the mysterious darkness,[3]
his high terrace reaches the blue heavens.
The remote barrens stretch on and on into the distance,
in depression, I think on the one I cherish.
Who is the one I cherish?—
one who scrutinizes clearly, responding to natural process.
The Winged Dragon was sinking under at Jizhou,[4]
and the Drought Goddess could not get to sleep.
Reveling in excess, flaunting the customs of the times—
how can such bring extension of one's years?

59 (XXX)

I drove my carriage out the gate,
planning to travel afar.
Where was I going in my travels?—
I was turning my back on boasting and renown.

be ruler; he struck Mount Buzhou, breaking one of the pillars that held up the heavens, resulting in the sky tilting to the northwest.

4 The Yellow Emperor sent his winged dragon against the rebel Chiyou, who opposed it by sending the spirits of wind and rain. Then the Yellow Emperor sent the heavenly maid Ba 魃 (also written with the woman radical), the spirit of drought, who dried up the wind and rain. See Additional Notes.

夸名不在己,
但願適中情。
單帷蔽皎日,
高榭隔微聲。
讒邪使交疏,
浮雲令晝冥。
嬿婉同衣裳,
一顧傾人城。
從容在一時,
繁華不再榮。
晨朝奄復暮,
不見所歡形。
黃鳥東南飛,
寄言謝友生。

60 (XXXI)

駕言發魏都,
南向望吹臺。
簫管有遺音,
梁王安在哉。

Boasting and renown are not within me,
I wish only to suit what I feel within.
A single-ply curtain blocks the shining sun,
a high pavilion cuts off faint sounds.
Malicious words cause associates to become estranged,
drifting clouds make broad daylight dark.
With languid charms, she shared my robes,[1]
one look could bring down a city.
But such dalliance is only for a moment,
rich flowering will bloom not a second time.
Dawn turns again to twilight suddenly,
and I see not the shape of the one I enjoy.
The yellow bird flies southeast,
I send farewells to my friends by it.

60 (XXXI)

Hitching my team I set out from Wei's capital,[2]
heading south, I gazed on the Piping Terrace.[3]
There are the remaining tones of flutes and pipes,
but where now is the King of Liang?

1 The long robes were also used as covers at night.

2 Daliang. The Warring States kingdom of Wei (also known as Liang) is the direct reference, but it may refer to the Wei dynasty.

3 Constructed for the King of Liang. King Hui of Liang held a reception for the feudal lords here; and when the ruler of Lu was to offer a toast, he denounced the luxury and excesses of the king, saying that it could destroy his kingdom. Jia Woods, mentioned in line 9, was one of Liang's pleasure sites that were denounced.

戰士食糟糠，
賢者處蒿萊。
歌舞曲未終，
秦兵已復來。
夾林非吾有，
朱宮生塵埃。
軍敗華陽下，
身竟為土灰。

61 (LXIX)

人知結交易，
交友誠獨難。
險路多疑惑，
明珠未可干。
彼求饗太牢，
我欲足一餐。
損益生怨毒，
咄咄復何言。

1 Here Wei's army was defeated by Qin in 273 BCE. Wei (Liang) did not fall until almost a half century later, and a century after the famous warning from the ruler of Lu.

2 This clearly echoes a famous passage by the Western Han writer Zou Yang 鄒陽 in his biography in *Shi ji* 史記: "I have heard that if one offers to give a jade disc that shines by night to someone of the road in the dark, anyone would grab his sword

His soldiers fed on the dregs and bran,
goodly men were lodged in the weeds.
But before the songs and dances were done,
the troops of Qin had already come back.
Jia Woods is no longer ours,
dust rises in vermilion palaces.
The army was defeated by Hua's south slope,[1]
his body at last was dust and ash.

61 (LXIX)

Everyone knows how easy it is to form associations,
but to make true friends is hard indeed.
A perilous course, with much doubt and suspicion:
one may not, with a bright pearl, accost someone.[2]
The others may seek to dine on the Tailao feast,[3]
but I want to be satisfied with a simple dinner.
The harms and benefits beget dislike and rancor,[4]
Alas! too bad!—what more can I say?

---

and look askance. Why?—because one has come forward for no reason." In other words, in a situation of "doubt and suspicion," such as meeting someone on a road in the dark, even the best intentions may be misunderstood.

3 An ancient ritual feast, for which an ox, a sheep, and a pig were butchered.

4 In the *Analects* Confucius speaks of three potential benefits and three potential harms from friends.

62 (XXXII)

朝陽不再盛，
白日忽西幽。
去此若俯仰，
如何以九秋。
人生若塵露，
天道竟悠悠。
齊景升丘山，
涕泗紛交流。
孔聖臨長川，
惜逝忽若浮。
去者余不及，
來者吾不留。
願登太華山，
上與松子遊。
漁父知世患，
乘流泛輕舟。

62 (XXXII)

Dawn light does not reach fullness a second time,
the bright sun suddenly hides away in the west.
It leaves this place as if in the nod of a head,
how is it that it's already autumn's end?
Human life is like dust and dew,
Heaven's Way goes on and on forever.
When Duke Jing of Qi climbed that mountain,
his tears flowed down in abundance.[1]
The Sage Confucius stood by the long river,
and regretted things passing on, suddenly as if adrift.
I will never reach those who are gone,
and I will not stay for those to come.
I wish I could climb Mount Taihua,
and roam above with Red Pine.[2]
The Fisherman understood the world's ills,
riding on the current in his light boat.[3]

1 Duke Jing climbed Ox Mountain in Qi and, enjoying its beauty, wept that someday he would have to die and give it up.

2 Red Pine is an immortal.

3 In "The Fisherman" in the *Chuci*, Qu Yuan encounters a fisherman who advises him to stay safe by drifting with the times.

63 (XXXIII)

一旦復一夕，
一夕復一朝。
顏色改平常，
精神自損消。
胸中懷湯火，
變化故相招。
萬事無窮極，
知謀苦不饒。
但恐須臾間，
魂氣隨風飄。
終身履薄冰，
誰知我心焦。

64 (XXXIV)

一旦復一朝，
一昏復一晨。
容色改平常，
精神自飄淪。
臨觴多哀楚，
思我故時人。
對酒不能言，
悽愴懷酸辛。

63 (XXXIII)

A morning and then an evening,
an evening, then a dawn again.
My complexion changes from what it was,
my spirit melts away into ruin.
In my breast I hold boiling water and fire,
transformations constantly instigate one another.
The thousands of things that happen are endless,
our knowledge and plans are woefully inadequate.
I fear only that in an instant
my soul will be whirled away in the wind.
To the end of my days I tread on thin ice,
who know how my heart is scorched?

64 (XXXIV)

A morning, and then another dawn,
a dusk and then another daybreak.
My complexion changes from what it was,
my spirit whirls and is swallowed up.
Looking down into my cup, much misery,
thinking of friends in former times.
Facing the ale I cannot speak,
depressed, I feel a sour pain.

願耕東皋陽，
誰與守其真。
愁苦在一時，
12 高行傷微身。
曲直何所為，
龍蛇為我鄰。

65 (LXX)

有悲則有情，
無悲亦無思。
苟非嬰網罟，
4 何必萬里畿。
翔風扶重霄，
慶雲招所晞。
灰心寄枯宅，
8 曷顧人間姿。
始得忘我難，
焉知嘿自遺。

I wish I could plow the sunlit side of the eastern wetlands,
but who would join me in preserving genuineness?
Sorrow and bitterness occur in the same moment,
noble actions bring harm to my poor body.
What does it matter whether coiled up or extending?—
dragon and serpent will be my neighbors.[1]

65 (LXX)

Whoever has sorrow has feelings,
sorrow's absence is likewise absence of longing.
So long as we are not caught up in a net,
why need one have a region of ten thousand leagues?
The whirlwind brushes the upper tiers of cloud,
auspicious vapors invite that which burns them away.
When the heart, turned to ash, lodges in a withered dwelling,
why should we look back to the charms of the human realm?
But I have just discovered the difficulties of forgetting self,
how can I understand silent self-abandonment?

1 The dragon coils up and hides to preserve itself and extends itself when it is timely. This is a standard figure of reclusion and service.

66 (LXXI)

木槿榮丘墓，
煌煌有光色。
白日頹林中，
翩翩零路側。
蟋蟀吟戶牖，
蟪蛄鳴荊棘。
蜉蝣玩三朝，
采采修羽翼。
衣裳為誰施，
俛仰自收拭。
生命幾何時，
慷慨各努力。

67 (LXXII)

修塗馳軒車，
長川載輕舟。
性命豈自然，
勢路有所繇。
高名令志惑，
重利使心憂。
親昵懷反側，
骨肉還相讎。

66 (LXXI)

The hibiscus blooms on tomb mounds,
such a splendid brilliance they have.
But when the bright sun sinks into the forest,
they flutter and fall by the road.
The cricket hums at the door and window,
the *huigu* cicada sings in the thorns.
The mayfly sports for but three days,
swarming, they ply brightly colored wings.
For whom do they make show of their attire?—
in an instant they put it away.
How long does their fated span last
that with brave abandon each does his utmost?

67 (LXXII)

On the long road speed grand carriages,
the lengthy river carries light boats.
This is not the natural course of human life,
it is something that follows from the path to power.
Great fame befuddles one's sense of purpose,
rich gain causes worries to the heart.
Dearest friends harbor discontent,
one's own flesh and blood turn to enemies.

更希毀珠玉，
可用登遨遊。

68 (LXXIII)

橫術有奇士，
黃駿服其箱。
朝起瀛洲野，
日夕宿明光。
再撫四海外，
羽翼自飛揚。
去置世上事，
豈足愁我腸。
一去長離絕，
千歲復相望。

69 (XL)

混元生兩儀，
四象運衡璣。
曒日布炎精，
素月垂景輝。

I hope to destroy pearls and jade
and thereby rise to free roaming.

68 (LXXIII)

On the great highway is a wondrous man,
yellowish steeds pull his wagon.
At dawn he rises in the wilds of Yingzhou,[1]
at sunset he stays at Bright Light.[2]
He tours places beyond the encircling seas again and again,
his wings carry him flying upward.
He abandons all matters of the world,
they are not worth troubling one's inner self.
Once he goes, he is gone forever,
after a thousand years one gazes for him still.

69 (XL)

The Primal Mix generated the Paired Norms,[3]
the Four Images set in motion the celestial sphere.[4]
The gleaming sun spreads its blazing essence,
the pale moon lets fall its glow.

1 One of the immortal isles.
2 This is identified with Cinnabar Hill in the mythic south, the dwelling of immortals.
3 The "paired norms" are Yin and Yang, Earth and Heaven.
4 The "four images" are metal, wood, water, and fire. The "celestial sphere" is an armillary sphere that shows the motions of heavenly bodies, an imperial armillary sphere used for astrological modelling.

晷度有昭回，
哀哉人命微。
飄若風塵逝，
忽若慶雲晞。
修齡適余願，
光寵非己威。
安期步天路，
松子與世違。
焉得凌霄翼，
飄颻登雲巍。
嗟哉尼父志，
何為居九夷。

70 (XLI)

天網彌四野，
六翮掩不舒。
隨彼紛綸客，
汎汎若浮鳧。
生命無期度，
朝夕有不虞。
列仙停修齡，
養志在沖虛。

The measures of light show the orbits of brightness,[1]
and, alas, man's life is a minor thing.
It is whirled like dust blown away in the wind;
it goes suddenly, like auspicious clouds evaporating in sunlight.
Long years suit my wishes,
glorious favor does not overawe me.
Anqi paced along paths in the heavens,
Red Pine strayed away from the world.[2]
How can I get wings to mount over high wisps,
to toss in the wind up over cliffs in cloud?
And how sad—Confucius's sense of purpose—
why would he want to lodge among the nine barbarians?[3]

70 (XLI)

The Net of Heaven extends over wilderness-girt world,[4]
a set of wings folded and unspread.
A tangled mass of travelers moving,
floating along like wild ducks.
Life has no measured span,
the unforeseen can happen from dawn to dusk.
The Undying have halted their long years,
they nourish their purposes in still void.

1 The relative proportion of light and shadow through the year, as on a sundial.

2 Anqi and Red Pine are immortals.

3 Confucius remarked that he would like to live among the nine non-Han peoples, "barbarians." When someone questioned how he could bear such uncivilized folk, Confucius answered that if a Sage were among them, they would not be uncivilized.

4 This refers to *Laozi*: "The Net of Heaven is vast, / its meshes are wide, yet lose nothing."

飄颻雲日間，
邈與世路殊。
榮名非己寶，
聲色焉足娛。
採藥無旋返，
神仙志不符。
逼此良可惑，
令我久躊躇。

71 (XLII)

王業須良輔，
建功俟英雄。
元凱康哉美，
多士頌聲隆。
陰陽有舛錯，
日月不常融。
天時有否泰，
人事多盈沖。
園綺遯南岳，
伯陽隱西戎。
保身念道真，
寵耀焉足崇。

Wind-whirled between clouds and sun,
they are remote and distinct from the paths of the world.
Glorious fame is not what they prize,
the senses' pleasures give them no delight.
They picked herbs and never turned back,
but accounts of immortals do not tally up.
Pressed by this, I am truly unsure,
it causes me to hesitate long.

71 (XLII)

The royal enterprise needs good helpers,
he depends on heroes to do great deeds.
The "chiefs" and the "gentles"—hale and fair,[1]
glorious is the sound of praise-hymns to the "many officers."[2]
Yet sometimes Yin and Yang miscarry,
sun and moon do not always cast a glow.
Heaven's moments have both fair fortune and foul,
human affairs often prosper and fail.
Dongyuan Gong and Qili Ji fled to the southern hills,[3]
Boyang hid among the western Rong tribes.[4]
Preserving their bodies, they thought on the genuine Way,
how can favor and glory deserve esteem?

1 The "eight chiefs" and the "eight gentles" were the talented helpers of the sage-kings Gaoxin and Gaoyang respectively. Here they are a figure for royal ministers.

2 "Many officers" refers to the courtiers of Zhou.

3 These are two of the "Four Greybeards," who withdrew in the chaos surrounding the collapse of Qin. Gaozu, the founder of the Han, wanted them to come to court, but they refused him.

4 Boyang is Laozi.

人誰不善始,
尟能剋厥終。
休哉上世士,
萬載垂清風。

72 (XXXV)

世務何繽紛,
人道苦不遑。
壯年以時逝,
朝露待太陽。
願攬羲和轡,
白日不移光。
天階路殊絕,
雲漢邈無梁。
濯髮暘谷濱,
遠遊崑岳傍。
登彼列仙岨,
採此秋蘭芳。
時路烏足爭,
太極可翱翔。

Who among men does not start off well?—
but few are able to carry on to the end.
Excellent were those men of ancient times,
they leave a pure influence for myriad years.

72 (XXXV)

What a tangled mess are tasks of this world!—
man's way allows no respite at all.
The years of my prime have passed on with their time,
dawn's dew, awaiting the sun.
I wish I could take hold of Xihe's reins,[1]
that the bright sun not move its light.
The road is cut off to Heaven's Stairs,[2]
the River of Stars is remote, no bridge across.
I would wash my hair on Yang Valley's banks,[3]
then travel afar to the edge of Kunlun.[4]
I would climb those great hills of the Undying,
and pick there blooms of autumn eupatorium.
The roads of these days are not worth the struggle,
one may soar aloft to the Supreme Ultimate.

1 Xihe is the driver of the sun-carriage.
2 A constellation.
3 The sun rises at Yang Valley.
4 The Kunlun Mountains of the immortals in the far west.

73 (LXXIV)

猗歟上世士，
恬淡志安貧。
季葉道陵遲，
馳騖紛垢塵。
甯子豈不類，
楊歌誰肯殉。
栖栖非我偶，
徨徨非己倫。
咄嗟榮辱事，
去來味道真。
道真信可娛，
清潔存精神。
巢由抗高節，
從此適河濱。

---

1 Ning Qi 甯戚 was a commoner who sought the service of Duke Huan of Qi. Disappointed, he became a drover. One night he was feeding the oxen and sang a song, tapping out the rhythm on the horns of an ox. Duke Huan happened to be nearby; hearing Ning Qi's song, he thought that this must be someone remarkable. He ordered Ning Qi to be brought to him and made him a minister.

2 The philosopher Yang Zhu's friend Ji Liang was sick. The sickness worsened and his sons stood around him weeping, begging their father to let them call a doctor.

73 (LXXIV)

Ah! the gentlemen of high antiquity,
tranquil and plain, their purpose was to be at rest in poverty.
But in these final days the Way has sunk into decay,
with furious galloping in billowing dirt and dust.
Master Ning's chant was certainly not improper,[1]
but who is willing to surrender to death as in Yang's song?[2]
Those who are constantly busy are not my type;
those who are always anxious are not my ilk.
Glory and shame occur in a breath,
I will go off to savor the Way's genuineness.
In truth the Way's genuineness may give delight,
the clear and pure preserves the essential spirit.
Chaofu and Xu You showed high principles,
from here I will go to the River's banks.[3]

Ji Liang asked Yang Zhu to sing a song to enlighten them. Yang Zhu sang a song, the burden of which was "No one knows." The sons did not understand and called in three doctors.

3 Xu You was an ancient recluse. Sage-king Yao wanted to turn the empire over to him, and Xu You fled to plow by the River Ying. Then Yao wanted to make him chief of all the nine regions, and Xu You washed out his ears because he claimed that his ears were sullied by Yao's summons. Chaofu was a fellow recluse and his friend.

74 (LXXV)

梁東有芳草,
一朝再三榮。
色容豔姿美,
光華輝傾城。
豈為明哲士,
妖蠱諂媚生。
輕薄在一時,
安知百世名。
路端便娟子,
但恐日月傾。
焉見冥靈木,
悠悠竟無形。

75 (LXXVI)

稅駕安可學,
東野窮路旁。
綸深魚淵潛,
矰設鳥高翔。
汎汎乘輕舟,
演漾靡所望。

74 (LXXV)

East of Daliang there is a flowering plant,
it blooms repeatedly in but a single dawn.
Its countenance is lovely with alluring charm,
its splendor casts the glow of a city-toppler.
This is no wise and enlightened man,
in his seductive witchery fawning flattery appears.
His flightiness is only of one moment,
how can he know fame for a hundred generations?
The wispy beauty at road's end
fears only that sun and moon will sink away.
How can he see the Mysterious Numinous Tree,[1]
on and on, at last without form.

75 (LXXVI)

How can one learn to unhitch one's carriage?—
by the roadside Dongye Bi is exhausted.[2]
When the line goes deep, the fish dives down further into the abyss,
when the stringed arrow is set, the birds wing higher.
Drifting along, riding a light boat,
on a vast flood where nothing can be seen.

---

1 A legendary tree that goes through one seasonal cycle every two thousand years.

2 Confucius's disciple Yan Yuan 顏淵 was with Duke Ding of Lu, who praised the driving of Dongye Bi. Yan Yuan said that he might be good at driving a carriage, but he would wear out the horses. This proved to be the case.

吹噓誰以益，
江湖相捐忘。
都冶難為顏，
修容是我常。
茲年在松喬，
恍惚誠未央。

76 (LXXVII)

咄嗟行至老，
僶俛常苦憂。
臨川羨洪波，
同始異支流。
百年何足言，
但苦怨與讎。
讎怨誰家子，
耳目還相羞。
聲色為胡越，
人情自逼遒。
招彼玄通士，
去來歸羨遊。

Who is benefitted from blowing moistening breath?—
abandon and forget one another on rivers and lakes.[1]
Hard to put on a charming and seductive countenance,
perfecting a proper demeanor is my constant principle.
Increasing years can be found in Red Pine and Qiao the Prince,[2]
in a hazy blur, truly they have no end.

76 (LXXVII)

In but a breath we approach old age,
laboring away, we constantly suffer from worries.
Looking out on a river, one admires mighty waves:
what was the same in the beginning developed into different channels.
Our hundred-year span is not worth mentioning,
we only suffer from anger and enmity.
Who are those who show anger and enmity?—
eyes and ears put each other to shame.
Sounds and visual sense are as far apart as Yue and Turkestan,[3]
human passions harry us.
I hail that man who comprehends the mystery,
let us go here and there and return to carefree roaming.

1 The *Zhuangzi* gives a story of fish left on dry land moistening one another with breath and bubbles and states that they would be better off forgetting each other in the rivers and lakes.

2 Immortals.

3 This is literally "Hu and Yue," the far north and far south. This was a standard phrase for the distance of separation.

77 (LXXVIII)

昔有神仙士,
乃處射山阿。
乘雲御飛龍,
嘘吸嘰瓊華。
可聞不可見,
慷慨嘆咨嗟。
自傷非疇類,
愁苦來相加。
下學與上達,
忽忽將如何。

78 (LXXIX)

林中有奇鳥,
自言是鳳凰。
清朝飲醴泉,
日夕栖山岡。
高鳴徹九州,
延頸望八荒。
適逢商風起,
羽翼自摧藏。

77 (LXXVIII)

Long ago a divine immortal
lived right in the folds of Mount Guye.[1]
He rode clouds and drove flying dragons,
he breathed in and out, nibbling alabaster flowers.
One may hear of him, but not meet him,
with strong feeling I heave great sighs.
I feel pain that I am not of his kind,
sorrow and bitterness come upon me.
"Study the world below and grasp what is above,"[2]
time fleets by and what can I do?

78 (LXXIX)

In the woods there is a wondrous bird,
it says that it is the phoenix.
In clear dawn it drinks from sweet springs,
at sunset it roosts on the hill.
Its loud cries penetrate all the nine regions,
it stretches its neck to gaze on the Eight Wilds.
It happens to meet the rising autumn wind,
and its wings are struck with pain.

1 See note to 33 (XXIII).

2 Quoting Confucius in *Analects* 14.37: "I study what lies below and come to grasp what is above. The one who understands me is Heaven" 下學而上達, 知我者其天乎.

一去崑崙西,
何時復回翔。
但恨處非位,
愴恨使心傷。

79 (LXXX)

出門望佳人,
佳人豈在兹。
三山招松喬,
萬世誰與期。
存亡有長短,
慷慨將焉知。
忽忽朝日隤,
行行將何之。
不見季秋草,
摧折在今時。

Once it goes off west of the Kunlun Mountains,
when will it fly back again?
It resents only being in the wrong place,
the misery makes the heart feel wounded.

79 (LXXX)

I go out the gate and gaze for the fair one,
but how could the fair one be here?
On the Three Mountains I would hail Red Pine and Qiao the Prince,[1]
but in myriad generations who could meet them?
Some lives are long and some are short,
overwhelmed with feeling, how can one know which it will be?
Fleeting on, the dawn sun sinks down,
on and on, where will I go?
Have you not seen the plants at autumn's end?—
their ruin is right now.

1 The three mountains are mountain islands inhabited by gods and immortals like Red Pine and Qiao the Prince.

80 (LXXXI)

昔有神仙者，
羨門與松喬。
噏習九陽間，
升遐嘰雲霄。
人生樂長久，
百年自言遼。
白日隕隅谷，
一夕不再朝。
豈若遺世物，
登明遂飄颻。

81 (XLIII)

鴻鵠相隨飛，
隨飛適荒裔。
雙翮凌長風，
須臾萬里逝。
朝餐琅玕實，
夕宿丹山際。
託身青雲中，
網羅不能制。
豈與鄉曲士，
攜手共言誓。

80 (LXXXI)

Long ago there were gods and immortals,
Masters Yanmen, Red Pine, and Qiao.
Billowing among the Ninefold Lights,[1]
they mounted far on high, nibbling the clouds.
Human life finds delight in living long,
a hundred years are considered remote.
The bright sun plummets into Yu Valley,[2]
once its evening comes, it will dawn no more.
Better to abandon the world's affairs,
to ascend to brightness and toss with the wind.

81 (XLIII)

Swans fly after one another,
they fly after one another to the far edge of the wilds.
Paired wings pass up over steady winds,
and in an instant they have gone thousands of miles.
At dawn they feed on the fruit of the *langgan* tree,
evenings they stay the night at the edge of Cinnabar Mountain.
They give themselves to the blue clouds—
no one can master them with a net.
How could they join the gentlemen of a locale,
holding hands and declaring vows?

1 Ninefold Lights is mentioned in the "Far Roaming" of the *Chuci*; Wang Yi glosses it as "the edge of Heaven and Earth."

2 Where the sun sets.

82 (LXXXII)

墓前熒熒者，
木槿輝朱華。
榮好未終朝，
連飆隕其葩。
豈若西山草，
琅玕與丹禾。
垂影臨增城，
餘光照九阿。
寧微少年子，
日夕歎咨嗟。

82 (LXXXII)

That which gleams before the graves,
the hibiscus, with crimson blooming aglow.
Its fine flowering does not last the morning,
continuous gusts make its blooms fall.
Better, the plants on the western mountains,[1]
the *langgan* tree and the cinnabar grain.
They cast shadows down from Layered Walls,[2]
their surplus of light makes the Nine Slopes shine.
How can there be no young man
heaving a sigh as the sun goes down?

1 The western mountains are here the Kunlun Mountains, the world of the immortals.

2 A peak of the Kunlun Mountains.

The Four-syllable-line Poems

There are also thirteen "Singing My Cares" in the four-syllable line. Three of these are partially cited in the Yiwen leiju *and a fragment of one is cited in* Taiping yulan 太平御覽. *The remaining nine, whose authenticity has been much debated, did not appear before around the turn of the seventeenth century. There was a strong incentive in this period to find previously unknown texts and a strong incentive to produce what could not be found. Forgery was rampant, and the scholarly skills to produce credible forgery had vastly improved over the mid-sixteenth century.*

The simple technique was to use phrases with textual parallels that were not anachronistic. The hapax legomena *of the five-syllable-line poems are almost entirely absent—but that could be a function of the four-syllable line poem. I will include the three that are cited in* Yiwen leiju. *We cannot, of course, be sure that they were by Ruan Ji, but at least parts of them were in his collection as it survived in the seventh century. We cannot be sure of the others that did not appear until a millennium later, but I can assure readers that they will not be missing a sparkling gem of poetry.*

Some factors should be considered with regard to poetry in the four-syllable line. The mid-third century saw a resurgence of interest in the four-syllable line; and the collections of Ruan's contemporary Xi Kang and the somewhat later Lu Yun 陸雲 (262–303), the two other collections from the period that have not been reconstituted from anthologies and encyclopedia citations, have a balance between five-syllable-line poems and four-syllable-line poems. It would be surprising if Ruan Ji did not write poems in the four-syllable line, but it is unsurprising that they were ignored in the fifth and sixth centuries as the four-syllable line was falling out of fashion.

The Fan Qin edition does not include them. We know that there were lacunae in some of the sixteenth-century editions of the poems in the five-syllable line and that these lacunae were filled in other editions. We cannot know if the filled lacunae were from a better source or added by the editor. In the same way, we cannot know if the additional lines in the poems in the four-syllable line were part of the continuous manuscript tradition or added by editors to make a more complete poem.

I

天地絪縕，
元精代序。
清陽曜靈，
和氣容與。
明月映天，
甘露被宇。
蓊鬱高松，
猗那長楚。
草蟲哀鳴，
倉庚振羽。
感時興思，
企首延佇。
於赫帝朝，
伊衡作輔。
才非允文，
器非經武。
適彼沅湘，
托分漁父。
優哉游哉，
爰居爰處。

I

Heaven and Earth have generative vapors,
the Primal Essence changes in its sequence.
Clear and bright is the shining Numen,[1]
the balmy air circulates leisurely.
The bright moon shines in the sky,
sweet dew covers the world.
Thick and full is the tall pine,
ah, how plentiful the kiwi!
Insects sing mournfully among the plants,
the oriole shakes its feathers.
Being stirred by the season gives rise to thoughts,
on tiptoe I gaze for a long time.
How awesome is our imperial court!
Yi Yin serves as advisor.[2]
My talents are not literary and cultured,
my abilities are not military.
I will go off to the Yuan and Xiang,
entrusting my fate to being the Fisherman.[3]
Relaxed! Content!
there I will lodge, there I will stay.

1 The sun.

2 Yi Yin was the famous minister of Tang, the founder of the Shang Dynasty.

3 The fisherman who encountered the despairing Qu Yuan and advised him to go along with the times.

II

月明星稀，
天高氣寒。
桂旗翠旌，
珮玉鳴鸞。
濯纓醴泉，
被服蕙蘭。
思從二女，
適彼湘沅。
靈幽聽微，
誰觀玉顏。
灼灼春華，
綠葉含丹。
日月逝矣，
惜爾華繁。

III

清風肅肅，
修夜漫漫。
嘯歌傷懷，
獨寐寤言。
臨觴拊膺，
對食忘餐。

II

The moon is bright, the stars are sparse,
the sky is high, the air is cold.
Cassia flags, kingfisher banners,
sash-strung jade, ringing phoenixes.
Washing my hat-strings in a sweet spring,
wearing basil and eupatorium.
I long to seek out those two women,[1]
and set off for the Xiang and Yuan.
Their numinous being was hidden, no sound to hear,
who can observe their countenances like white jade?
Glowing is spring's flowering,
green leaves hold cinnabar blooms within.
The days and months pass on,
I hate to lose the thick flowering.

III

The clear wind is whooshing,
the long night goes on and on.
Crooning and singing wounds the heart,
sleeping alone I wake and speak.
My goblet before me, I sigh putting hand on chest,
facing my food, I forget about eating.

1 The goddesses of the Xiang River.

世無萱草，
令我哀嘆。
鳴鳥求友，
谷風刺愆。
重華登庸，
帝命凱元。
鮑子傾蓋，
仲父佐桓。
回濱嗟虞，
敢不希顏。
志存明規，
匪慕彈冠。
我心伊何，
其芳若蘭。

1 From “Fa mu” 伐木 in the “Lesser Odes” of the *Shijing*.

2 A poem in the “Lesser Odes” of the *Shijing* in the voice of a woman divorced by her husband so that he could take a new wife.

3 “Double pupils” was a name for sage-king Shun, each of whose eyes had two pupils. “Advanced and employed” refers to finding worthy men to serve in governing.

4 These are the eight talented helpers (literally, “the eight gentles and eight chiefs”) of rulers in high antiquity. See note to 71 (XLII).

There is no herb of forgetting in this age,
which makes me heave a mournful sigh.
Singing birds seek their friends,[1]
“Valley Wind” rebukes abandonment.[2]
“Double pupils” advanced and employed,[3]
the god-king commissioned the eight worthy aides.[4]
Master Bao halted his carriage,
“Father Zhong” assisted Huan.[5]
[?]
dare one not admire her countenance?
My sense of purpose keeps the bright mirror of right,
I do not yearn to brush off my cap.[6]
How is my mind?—
its fragrance is like eupatorium.

5 This is the story of Bao Shu 鮑叔, who formed a friendship (“tipping his carriage cover” in close conversation) with Guan Zhong 管仲. Bao Shu served Duke Huan of Qi while Guan Zhong was imprisoned for serving a competitor of Duke Huan when they were princes. Bao Shu recommended Guan Zhong to Duke Huan, and Guan Zhong was employed, helping Duke Huan to eventually become the leader among the rulers of the domains.

6 “Brushing off one’s cap” was a mark of going into service.

東平賦

夫九州有方圓,
九野有形勢,
區域高下,
物有其制:
開之則通,
塞之則否;
流之則行,
壅之則止;
崇之則成丘陵,
汙之則爲藪澤;
逶迤漫衍,
繞以大壑。

及至分之國邑,
樹之表物。
四時儀其象,
陰陽暢其氣,
傍通迴蕩,
有形有德,
雲升雷動,
一叫一默;

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The Poetic Expositions (*fu*)

Poetic Exposition on Dongping

The Nine Regions have each their different shapes,
the Nine Wilds have each its own topography,
and according to the altitude of the region,
things have their own determinations:
open the regions and things get through,
block them, and things do not;
let things flow and they move,
plug them and they stop;
pile things high and you have hills,
leave things stagnant and fetid and there are swamp and marsh;
winding and spilling over,
surrounded by the Ocean Gulf.

When this is divided into domains and towns,
marker-signs are erected.
The four seasons match with their astral images,
Yin and Yang extend their vapors,
reaching everywhere, swirling around,
possessing forms, possessing inner power,
clouds rise, thunder stirs,
something cries out, something is silent;

或由之安，
乃用斯惑。

若觀夫隅隈之缺，
幽荒之途，
沕漠之域，
窮野之都；
奇偉譎詭，
不可勝圖。

乃有遍遊之士，
浩養之雅，
淩驚飈，
躡浮霄，
清濁俱逝，
吉凶相招。

是以伶倫遊鳳于崑崙之陽，
鄒子噏溫于黍谷之陰，
伯高登降于尚季之上，
羨門逍遙于三山之岑；

1 In the differentiation of primal chaos, the “rarified” *qi* rose up and became the heavens while the heavier “turbid” *qi* sank down and became earth.

2 The Yellow Emperor sent Ling Lun to the Kunlun Mountains to get bamboo to establish the standard pitches, which made the sound of the phoenix.

3 There was a valley in northeast China so cold that grain would not grow. Zou Yan

sometimes things are at ease in all this,
but by this they may also go awry.

If one observes the gaps in jagged and winding cliffs,
routes through the isolated prairies,
regions of unfathomed wastes,
cities in remote wilderness,
the strange marvels and weird monstrosities there
may not be all depicted.

Then there are those gentlemen who have traveled everywhere,
those cultured, who nourish vast energies,
who mount over the blasts of wind,
who tread drifting auroras.
The rarified and the turbid go off together,[1]
good fortune and ill fortune invite one another in turn.

Thus did Ling Lun visit the phoenix on the south slope of Kunlun,[2]
Master Zou imbibed the warmth on the north slope of Millet Valley,[3]
Bocheng Zigao went up and down on Shangji,[4]
Yanmen Zigao roamed freely among the peaks of the Three
  Mountains;[5]

---

played the pitch-pipes, and the cold changed to warmth. The millet planted there was so fruitful that the valley was called Millet Valley.

4 All we know of Bocheng Zigao is that he attained the Way. Shangji is not known.

5 Yanmen Zigao was an immortal, and the Three Mountains are the three isles of the immortals in the Eastern Ocean.

上敖玄圃，
下遊鄧林。
鳳鳥自歌，
翔鸞自舞，
嘉穀蕃殖，
匪我稷黍。

其阨陋則有橫術之場，
鹿豕之墟，
匪修潔之攸麗，
于穢累之所如。
西則首仰阿甄，
傍通戚蒲，
桑間濮上，
淫荒所廬。
三晉縱橫，
鄭衛紛敷，
豪俊淩屬，
徒屬留居。

1 In the Kunlun Mountains.
2 The *luan* is another auspicious mythical bird like the phoenix.
3 All locales in Shandong.
4 "Among the mulberries" is associated with several poems in the *Shijing* that purportedly described promiscuity. Linked with Music Master Yan serving the last

Above they swaggered in Mysterious Garden,[1]
below they roamed in Deng Woods.
The phoenix sang out on its own accord,
on its own accord the winging *luan* bird danced,[2]
fine grains increased abundantly,
not our worldly millet.

Where it is cramped and low, there is an area of streets and avenues,
a desolate waste with deer and boars,
not made splendid by repair and cleaning,
but where heaps of rotting filth go.
To the west it [Dongping] looks up towards E and Zhen,
from all sides it reaches to Qi and Pu,[3]
"Among the mulberries," "by the river Pu,"
where lascivious disorder lodges.[4]
Linked crossways and vertically to the three domains that were Jin,[5]
Zheng and Wei spread everywhere.[6]
Even the very best are fierce and bullying,
gangs stay and live there.

Shang king, "by the river Pu," was also associated with the music of a state about to fall.

5 The domain of Jin in the Spring and Autumn period was, at the beginning of the Warring States, divided into three smaller domains: Han, Wei, and Zhao.

6 These are the ancient domains that were once adjacent to, or part of, Dongping's territory. "Zheng and Wei" probably refers to the music of those domains, music that represented moral corruption and decadence.

是以强禦横于戶牖，
怨毒奮于牀隅，
仍鄉飲而作慝，
豈待久而發諸。

□土惟中，
劉王是聚。
高危臨城，
窮川帶宇。
叔氏婚族，
實在其湄。
背險向水，
垢污多私。
是以其州閭鄙邑，
莫言或非。
殪情戾慮，
以殖厥資。
其土田則原壤蕪荒，
樹藝失時，
疇畝不辟，
荊棘不治。
流潢餘溏，
洋溢靡之。

Therefore the strong and oppressive act at will behind windows and doors,
bitter hatreds are aroused on the couch,
even at the Regional Symposium they commit evil acts,[1]
how could such acts wait long to break out?

Its soil . . . is middling,
Liu princes are many here.[2]
Their intimidating eminence oversees the city,
an almost dry river lines the dwellings.
The Shu family and their kin by marriage
pack its shores.
With their backs to the fastness, facing the water,
in filth acting for their own private interests.
Thus in their wards in the city and its outlying towns,
no one ever suggests they do wrong.
By murdering all feeling and perverting their thoughts
they founded their wealth.
As for their lands and fields, the soil of the plains runs wild,
in their husbandry they miss the proper seasons,
field plots are not cleared,
briars are left uncontrolled.
Their field reservoirs have ample muck,
with the spillover having nowhere to go.

1 The “Regional Symposium” was a solemn drinking ritual, very important in Ruan Ji’s time.

2 Descendants of the Han imperial clan.

東當三齊，
西接鄒魯。
長塗千里，
受茲商旅。
力閭爲率，
師使以輔。
驕僕纖邑，
于焉斯處。
川澤捷徑，
洞庭荊楚。
遺風過□，
是徑是宇。

由而紹俗，
靡則靡觀。
非夷罔式，
導斯作殘。
是以其唱和矜勢，
背理向姦。
尚氣逐利，
因畏惟愆。
其居處壅翳蔽塞，
窕邃弗章。

To the east it faces the three parts of Qi,
to the west it touches Zou and Lu.
The long road of a thousand leagues
receives traveling merchants.
Saving effort guides them,
bands are formed to help them.
With arrogant servants in tiny towns,
there they take up lodging.
By river and wetland are shortcuts
from Lake Dongting, Jing and Chu.
Their lingering influence passes . . .
here is their path, here they find dwelling.

By all this their customs are continued,
without any rule, without supervision.
Neither the constant nor the norm,
they follow this course and wreak ruin.
Thus they work together boasting their power,
rejecting natural law and heading toward debauchery.
Esteeming temper, pursuing profit,
depending on intimidation, they transgress.
Their dwellings are blockaded, hidden, and closed off,
in deep recesses, not out in the open.

倚以陵墓,
帶以曲房。
是故居之則心昏,
言之則志哀。
悸罔徙易,
靡所寤懷。

其外有濁河縈其溏,
清濟盪其樊。
其北有連岡,
崺㠟崎巇。
山陵崔巍,
雲電相干。
長風振厲,
蕭條大原。

其南則浮汶湛湛,
行潦成池。
深林茂樹,
蓊鬱參差。
群鳥翔天,
百獸交馳。
雖黔首不淑兮,
黨山澤之足彌。

They rest up against tomb mounds,
lined by their inner chambers.
For this reason those who dwell there have befuddled minds,
those who speak of it feel lament in their sense of purpose,
Shocked and dazed, hesitating in confusion,
no one awakens in their heart.

Beyond that there is the muddy River winding around their ponds,
and the clear Ji sweeping past their hedges.
To the north there are lines of hills,
stretching low, but rising up sharply.
And mountain slopes tower on high,
with lightning in clouds assaulting them.
A steady wind fiercely shakes
the great plain bleak and bare.

To the south the drifting Wen River is deep,
with shallow streamlets forming pools.
Its deep-set forests with luxuriant trees
are densely thick and uneven.
Flocks of birds fly around in the skies,
and all the different beasts run this way and that.
Though the common folk here be not good,
perhaps its mountains and marshes are enough to make up the flaw.

古哲人之攸貴兮，
好政教之有儀。
彼玄真之所寶兮，
樂寂寞之無知。

咨閭閻之散感兮，
因回風以揚聲。
瞻荒榛之蕪穢兮，
顧東山之葱青。
甘丘里之舊言兮，
發新詩以慰情。
信嚴霜之未滋兮，
豈丹木之再榮。
北門悲于殷憂兮，
小弁哀于獨誠。
鷗端一而慕仁兮，
何淳樸之靡逞；
彼羽儀之感志兮，
矧伊人之匪靈。

1 These were the qualities embraced by ancient sages according to the *Classic of Changes*.
2 This is from the *Zhuangzi*, referring to the old customs and perhaps even dialect of a particular community.
3 Although there are various explanations, the implications of the "cinnabar [red] tree" are uncertain.

What was valued by wise men of old
was essentially that there be right principles in governance.
But what was treasured in "the mysterious and authentic"[1]
was their delight in being unfriended in solitary silence.

I sigh at the responses of sorrow scattered among the villages,
their sounds are borne with the whirling gusts of wind.
I observe the weedy filth of scrub running wild,
then look around to the scallion green of the eastern mountains.
I am interested in the old terms of the community,[2]
bringing forth new poems to console themselves.
Truly the harsh frost is not yet abundant,
but how can the cinnabar tree flourish a second time?[3]
"Northgate" grieved with deep worries,
"Small Cap" lamented in solitary sincerity.[4]
The gulls were focused and admired kindliness,[5]
why were purity and innocence not displayed?
Their wings' grace could be moved by someone's sense of purpose,
and even more when that person lacked instinctive understanding.[6]

4 These are two poems from the *Classic of Poetry* expressing the speaker's sorrow.
5 This refers to a story in the *Liezi* of a boy who spent time on the seashore and the gulls would flock to him. His father told him to catch one and bring it back so that the father could amuse himself with it. The next time he went to the seashore, the gulls kept away from him.
6 Presumably referring to the boy in the *Liezi* story.

時憖悃以遙思兮，
颸飄颻以欲歸。
欽丕遊于陵顛兮，
舉斯群而競飛。
物倏化而神樂兮，
寧遐觀之可追。

乘松舟以載險兮，
雖無維而自縶。
騁驊騮于狹路兮，
顧蹇驢而弗及。
資章甫以遊越兮，
見犀光而先入。
被文繡而貫戎兮，
識旃裘之必襲。
奉淳德之平和兮，
孰斯邦之可集。

將言歸于美俗兮，
請王子與俱遊。

1 Yinpi (or Qinpi) was a figure in the *Shanhai jing*, who helped kill Baojiang and was subsequently executed by the High God. Then he transformed into a bird of prey called the E 鶚.

2 This refers to a parable in the *Zhuangzi* about a man of the domain of Song who took ritual *zhangfu* hats to sell in Yue, only to discover that in Yue men cut their

Sometimes in repressed agitation my thoughts go far,
in the whirlwind's gusts I want to go off.
The Yinpi roamed to the great hill's summit,[1]
making the flock lift off racing in flight.
This creature practiced Transformation and its spirit felt joy,
but how may such a distant perspective be found?

If I ride a boat of pine, faring on perils,
though I have no mooring rope, I arrest it myself.
If I gallop on a Hualiu steed on a narrow road,
I may look around on a lame donkey but do not catch up.
With a stock of *zhangfu* caps I visited Yue,[2]
but seeing rhino-horn light, they go in ahead.[3]
Wearing patterned embroidery I offer merchandise to barbarians,
recognizing that they will always choose to wear felt capes.[4]
I offer the balanced harmony of pure virtue,
but who would stay on in this land?

I am going to go back to where customs are beautiful,
I will ask Qiao the Prince to roam with me.[5]

---

hair short and tattooed their bodies, thus having no use for such caps. This probably refers to the lack of culture in Dongping.

3 Chen Bojun takes "rhino-horn light" as referring to a sword-hilt, and by extension, a sword. This suggests that the locals like to fight.

4 The felt cape was associated with the non-Han people of Inner Asia.

5 An immortal.

漱玉液之滋怡兮，
飲白水之清流。
遂虛心而後已兮，
又何懷乎患憂。

重曰：
嘉年時之淑清兮，
美春陽以肇夏。
託思飈而載行兮，
因形骸以成駕。
遵間維而長驅兮，
問迷罔于菀風。
玄雲興而四周兮，
寒雨淪而下降。
忽一寤而喪軌兮，
蹈空虛而遂征。
扶搖蔽于合墟兮，
咸池照乎增城。
欣煌熠之朝顯兮，
喜太陽之炎精。

I will rinse my mouth with jade fluids and increase my joy,
I will drink the pure currents of clear water.
Then I will empty my mind, and afterwards it will be over,
what concern will there be then with worries of ruin?

The Reprise:
I praise the pure clarity of the season,
I commend bright spring that ushers in summer.
Entrusting myself to gusting thoughts, I set out,
using my body as my carriage.
I go along the intervals of earth's ends, galloping far,
I ask Yuanfeng about confusion.[1]
Black clouds rise and surround on all sides,
cold rain falls and descends.
Suddenly I awaken and have lost the track,
I tread emptiness and then fare on.
The Fuyao Tree is hidden by Combined Emptiness Mountain,[2]
Xianchi shines at Layered Walls.[3]
I rejoice in dawn's appearance of effulgent radiance,
I enjoy the fiery essence of the sun, Great Yang.

1 Yuanfeng is a character of Daoist vision in a dialogue in the "Heaven and Earth" chapter of the *Zhuangzi*. Confusion here is a positive quality.

2 In the *Zhuangzi* the Fuyao is a divine tree that grows in the Eastern Ocean. In the *Shanhai jing* Combined Emptiness Mountain is where the sun and moon rise.

3 Xianchi is the pool where the sun goes down. Layered Walls is a section of the Kunlun Mountains, the world of immortals. It is also the name of a constellation and may be used in that sense here.

測虛舟以遑思兮，
聊逍遙于清溟。
謹玄真之諶訓兮，
想至人之有形。

繡靡覩其紛錯兮，
慮彌遠而度逼。
幷旋軫于畎澮兮，
若空桑之可即。
言淫衍而莫止兮，
心綿綿而未息。
集書誥以鑒戒兮，
悵衆誨之難測。
神遙遙以抒歸兮，
畏雙環之在側。
咨禽鳥之不群兮，
悼悠悠之無極。

1 This echoes the famous story in the *Zhuangzi* about bumping into an empty boat. Were there someone in it, there would be anger; the empty boat, however, produces no anger.

2 That is, as in embroidery if one looks too closely, one cannot see the intricate pattern; the pattern becomes visible only by standing back and looking at it.

3 There is a Kongsang Mountain in *Shanhai jing*, one of Ruan Ji's favorite sources. Among the various mountains with that name, the one near Dongping in the ancient state of Lu seems the best contender.

4 These are the "Announcements" in the *Classic of Documents*.

I fathom the empty boat to give my thoughts pause,[1]
for the while I wander freely in the clear darkness.
I respect the sincere teaching of the mysterious and genuine
180 and imagine the perfected being having form.

As in embroidery, I cannot scrutinize its dense array,
The farther away one is in considering it, the measure of it becomes nearer.[2]
I turn my coaches together where field ditches converge,
184 and it seems I could approach Kongsang Mountain.[3]
Words keep flooding over and none can stop them,
my mind keeps going on and does not rest.
I gather the written "Announcements" and examine their admonitions,[4]
188 upset that all the instructions are hard to fathom.
My spirit goes far off and expresses a wish to return,
but I dread the paired rings being at my side.[5]
I sigh for the bird that does not go in flocks,[6]
192 my sorrow lasts on and has no limit.

5 This may refer to a story in the *Zuo zhuan* (Duke Zhao 16) in which Xuanzi, emissary from the great domain of Jin, was on a mission in the small domain of Zheng. There a merchant had a jade ring that was the pair of one Xuanzi had in his possession. Xuanzi asked the minister of Zheng to have it given to him, but the ruler of Zheng refused the request on the grounds that it was improper. Then Xuanzi purchased the ring, but the merchant said that he would have to report it to the ruler. When the ruler of Zheng then reprimanded his behavior again, Xuanzi declined to take the ring.

6 This echoes the words of Qu Yuan in the "Li Sao": "The bird of prey does not go in flocks."

感藜藿之易修兮，
攝左右之相譽。
懼從風而永去兮，
託顓頊于鮒隅。
雖琴瑟之畢存兮，
豈聲曲之復舒？
慮遨遊以覿奇兮，
彼上騰其焉如？
紛晻曖以亂錯兮，
漫浩瀁而未靜。
理都繆而改據兮，
竦端委而自整。
制規矩以儀衡兮，
占我龜以觀省。
眺茲輿之所徹兮，
實斯近而匪遠。
豈三年之無問兮，
將一往而九反。

1 Bracken and beans provide coarse, plain fare.

2 Zhuanxu was a legendary semi-divine ruler of high antiquity, buried on the Fuyu Mountain in the remote wilderness.

3 This may be the zither of sage-king Shun on which he played “Southern Wind,” “Nan feng” 南風.

I am stirred that bracken and beans are easy to tend,[1]
leading those close by to praise them.
I fear following the wind and going off forever,
I entrust myself to Zhuanxu at the Fuyu Mountain.[2]
Even though his zither survives intact,
how can its notes and melodies again be performed?[3]
I plan to go roving and catch sight of wonders,
they have mounted on high and where have they gone?[4]
Darkness spreads everywhere, all mixed together,
a vast flooding expanse, not still.
Norms have all gone wrong and changed their basis,
I lift my ritual *duanwei* robes and straighten them myself.[5]
I regulate compass and square to model the armillary sphere,
I do divination with my tortoise-shell to investigate.
Peering ahead to where this coach will reach,[6]
it is indeed near and not far.
How could it be three years without word?—[7]
I am about to go off once and for all, turning back nine times.

4 This makes sense if we assume that the “wonders” are “wondrous beings,” of the sort that Ruan Ji is always seeking.

5 These are ritual robes of antiquity.

6 Presumably his body as his carriage, from l. 166.

7 Echoing Qu Yuan’s three years of exile without being recalled to the capital.

顧杲日之初開兮，
馳曲陵而飾容。
時零落之飄遙兮，
試枯菀之必從。

釋遼遙之闊度兮，
習約結之常契。
巡襄城之間牧兮，
誦純一之遺誓。
被風雨之沾濡兮，
安敢軒翥而遊署。
竊悄悄之眷貞兮，
泰恬淡而永世。
豈淹留以爲感兮？
將易貌乎殊方。
乃擇高以登栖兮，
永欣欣而樂康！

I look around at the morning sun first appearing,
I gallop to a winding hill and make my demeanor proper.
At the time leaves are falling and tossed afar,
in truth the withering will inevitably follow.

I will give up the vast measure of remote distances,
I will practice what is constantly compatible as I swore before.
I will tour the fallow outlands of the city of Xiang,[1]
I will recite the oath handed down, pure and innocent.
Soaked by the wind and rain,
how dare I take wing on high, roaming and settling down?
Inside I am troubled and look to the genuine,
I will be at peace in pleasing calm forever.
How could I be stirred up by lingering here?—
I shall change how I look in a different place.[2]
I will indeed choose a high place to climb and roost,
forever contented in good health and joy.

1 This seems to refer to a story in the “Xu Wugui” 徐無鬼 chapter of *Zhuangzi*, in which the Yellow Emperor was touring the outlands of the city of Xiang and encountered a young horse-herder. He asked the young man about governing the world, and the horse-herder replied: “Do nothing to harm the horses.”

2 Perhaps referring to the return of youth that is said to accompany becoming an immortal.

首陽山賦

正元元年秋，余尚爲中郎，在大將軍府，獨往南墻下，北望首陽山，作賦曰：

在茲年之末歲兮，
端旬首而重陰。
風飄回以曲至兮，
雨旋轉而瀸襟。
蟋蟀鳴乎東房兮，
鶗鴂號乎西林。
時將暮而無儔兮，
慮凄愴而感心。
振沙衣而出門兮，
纓委絕而靡尋。
步徙倚以遙思兮，
喟嘆息而微吟。
將修飾而欲往兮，
衆螽螽而笑人。
靜寂寞而獨立兮，
亮孤植而靡因。
懷分索之情一兮，
穢群僞之射真。
信可實而弗離兮，
寧高舉而自儐。

Poetic Exposition on Mount Shouyang

The first year of the Zhengyuan reign (254), autumn, I am still an Inner Courtier in the General's establishment. I went out beside the southern wall and gazed north to Mount Shouyang. I composed the following poetic exposition.

It was a late season of the year,
right at the week's start, with a thick cloud cover.
The wind gusted in whirls reaching everywhere,
the rain blew around and soaked my gown's opening.
The cricket chirped in the eastern chambers,
the cuckoo cried out in the western woods.
The season was about to draw to a close, I had no companions,
my thoughts were gloomy, my heart was stirred.
I threw on my raincoat and went out the gate,
my hat-strings had broken off and were nowhere to be found.
I paced back and forth and brooded on things remote,
I heaved a great sigh and softly groaned.
I was going to make ready, about to leave,
the snaggle-toothed crowd mocks me.
Quiet and lonely, I stand apart,
steadfast, I am upright and alone, with none to depend on.
I harbor a single-mindedness to be gone from here,
repulsed by how the crowd of false men reject the true.
Truly this may be made actual and not departed from,
better to rise up on high and leave this behind.

聊仰首以廣頫兮，
瞻首陽之岡岑。
樹叢茂以傾倚兮，
紛蕭爽而揚音。

下崎嶇而無薄兮，
上洞徹而無依。
鳳翔過而不集兮，
鳴梟群而幷栖。
飈遙逝而遠去兮，
二老窮而來歸。
實囚軋而處斯兮，
焉暇豫而敢誹。
嘉粟屏而不存兮，
故甘死而采薇。
彼背殷而從昌兮，
投危敗而弗遲。
此進而不合兮，
又何稱乎仁義？
肆壽夭而弗豫兮，
競毀譽以爲度。
察前載之是云兮，
何美論之足慕。

For the moment I lift my head and look widely,
and I catch sight of the high ridge of Mount Shouyang.
The stands of trees flourish and bend,
everywhere rustling, raising their sound.

Below, rough and rocky, with no clumps of plants,
above, clear and open, resting on nothing.
The phoenix soars past and does not alight,
hooting owls form flocks and perch together.
Swept upward they went, going off afar,
those two old men, in hard straits, came here.[1]
Indeed they dwelt here, hard pressed,
of course they would not have denounced him casually.
They felt grain-abstention was noble, they did not survive,
they were indeed willing to die and picked wild beans.
The others turned their back on Yin [Shang] and followed Chang,[2]
they abandoned peril of ruin and did not delay.[3]
These two came forward and did not agree;
why were they praised for fellow-feeling and right?[4]
They acted rashly regarding lifespans and were not at ease,
contesting for good name as their measure.
If you examine what was said in former years,
how does the fine praise deserve envy?

1 These are Bo Yi and Shu Qi, who denounced King Wu of Zhou when, soon after the death of his father King Wen, rose in rebellion against the Shang dynasty. They lived as recluses on Mount Shouyang, “refusing to eat the grain of Zhou,” and subsequently starved to death.

2 King Wen of Zhou.

3 That is, they followed King Wen's son, King Wu, in rebelling against the Shang (Yin) dynasty.

4 Confucius praised Bo Yi and Shu Qi for these qualities in the *Analects*.

茍道求之在細兮,
44 焉子誕而多辭?
且清虛以守神兮,
豈慷慨而言之?

If the Way is sought in lesser particulars,
44 why were you so extravagantly full of words?
For the while preserve your spirit in pure emptiness,
how could you get all worked up and say it?

鳩賦

嘉平中得兩鳩子，常食以黍稷，後卒爲狗所殺，故爲作賦。

伊嘉年之茂惠，
洪肇怳惚以發蒙。
有期緣之奇鳥，
以鳴鳩之攸同。
翔彫木以胎隅，
寄增巢于喬松；
噏雲霧以消息，
遊朝陽以相從。
曠逾旬而育類，
嘉七子之修容。

始戢翼而樹羽，
遭金風之蕭瑟。
既顛覆而靡救，
又振落而莫弼。
陵桓山以徘徊，
臨舊鄉而思入；
揚哀鳴以相送，
悲一往而不集。

Poetic Exposition on the Cuckoos

In the Jiaping reign (249–254) I got a pair of cuckoos and would always feed them grain. Later they were killed by a dog, so I wrote this poetic exposition on them.

It was the abundant grace of an excellent year,
its mighty beginning was a blur, then the dark was lifted.
There were remarkable birds, acting by abiding reasons,
of the same kind as the singing dove.
They flew over a tracery of trees for an egg-laying nook,[1]
and lodged their twig-formed nest in a pine by the edge.
They imbibed cloud and mist to take their rest.
and roamed together in the morning sun.
More than ten long days they nurtured their kind,
admiring the fine appearance of their seven chicks.

At first they drew in their wings and preened their feathers,
then encountered the whistling of the metallic wind.[2]
The nest overturned, no saving it,
the chicks were also shaken down, and no one could help them.
They then crossed over mighty mountains, and lingered,
looking down on their former land and longing to enter it.
They raised mournful cries, seeing each other off,
grieving that once they went, they would roost together no more.

1 A place to hatch the eggs and take care of the fledglings.
2 The west wind, usually associated with autumn.

終飄遙以流離，
傷弱子之悼栗。
何依恃以育養？
賴兄弟之親戚。
背草萊以求仁，
託君子之靜室。
甘黍稷之芳饎，
安戶牖之無疾。
潔文襟以交頸，
抗華麗之艷溢。
端妍姿以鑒飾，
好威儀之如一。
聊俯仰以逍遙，
求愛媚于今日。
何飛翔之羨慕，
願投報而忘畢。
值狂犬之暴怒，
加楚害于微軀。
欲殘沒以糜滅，
遂捐棄而淪失。

[嗟薄賤之可悼，
豈有忘于須臾。]

At last, wind-tossed and homeless,
they felt pain for the fearful trembling of their young brood.
What could they rely on for nurture?—
they had only their brothers as kin.
They turned away from the wilds to seek kindness,
they lodged in the quiet chambers of a gentleman.
They enjoyed the sweet victuals of grain,
and inside the windows rested safe from harm.
They preened their patterned breasts and twined necks,
and raised a gorgeous flood of splendor.
Then they adorned their fine figures in a mirror,
a good deportment, as if in unison.
For a while they moved around and roamed free,
seeking loving fondness in the present moment.
How could they envy flying around?—
they wished to repay my gift and forget the bird-snares.
But they encountered the violent rage of a wild dog
that wrought painful harm on their small bodies.
They were about to perish and rot away,
thus they were thrown away and lost.

[Alas, how lamentable these insignificant and humble creatures!—
how could one forget them in just a moment?]

獮猴賦

昔禹平水土而使益驅禽，
滌蕩川谷兮櫛梳山林，
是以神姦形于九鼎而異物來臻。
故豐狐文豹釋其表，
間尾騶虞獻其珍；
夸父獨鹿祓其豪，
青馬三騅棄其群。
此以其壯而殘其生者也。

若夫熊狚之遊臨江兮，
見厥功以乘危。
夔負淵以肆志兮，
揚震聲而□皮。
處閑曠而或昭兮，
何幽隱之罔隨。
鼷畏逼以潛身兮，
穴神丘之重深。
終或餌以求食兮，
烏鑿之而能禁？

1 Yao had Great Yu dig the channels of China's rivers and drain off the Flood. The harmful animals that accompanied the flood were also driven off. Yi was the gamekeeper of Sage-king Shun.

2 Mythological beasts. The former is otherwise unknown, but the Zouyu was known as an auspicious animal.

Poetic Exposition on the Macaque

Long ago Yu balanced the waters and land
  and Yi was employed to drive off birds and beasts,[1]
He washed the streams and valleys clean
  and combed the mountain forests.
Thereupon divine monstrosities were figured on the Nine Tripods, and
  strange creatures gathered thereon.
Thus did the Giant Foxes and Patterned Pards open forth their furs,
the Jianwei and the Zouyu present their treasures;[2]
The Kuafu beast and the Dulu have their aggression dispelled,
The Green Horse and the Spotted Palfrey leave their herds.
These cases are those when being splendid harms one's life.

When it comes to the bear and the dog-monkey roaming by the river,
they reveal their merit in braving danger.
The one-footed Kui depended on the still deeps and acted as it willed,
but raising a thunderous sound, it lost its skin;[3]
if it stayed out in the open and was sometimes seen,
how could it not be followed to hidden recesses?
The mouse feared being hard pressed and hid away,
it burrowed into the layered depths of an altar mound;
but at last it was beguiled by a bait and tried to eat it,
how could it be able to prevent being dug out?[4]

3 The mythical Kui had such a powerful voice that the Yellow Emperor made a drum of its skin.

4 This apparently refers to several occasions in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (Duke Cheng 7 and Duke Ding 15) when a ritual was interrupted on finding that the sacrificial bull had been gnawed by a *xi* mouse.

誠有利而可欲兮，
雖希覯而爲禽。
故近者不稱歲，
遠者不歷年；
大則有稱于萬年，
細者笑于目前。

夫獼猴直其微者也，
猶繫累于下陳。
體多似而匪類，
形乖殊而不純。
外察慧而內無度兮，
故人面而獸心，
性褊淺而干進兮，
似韓非之囚秦。
揚眉額而驟呻兮，
似巧言而僞真。
藩從後之繁衆兮，
猶伐樹而喪鄰。

Indeed when there is advantage and a thing is wanted,
however rarely glimpsed, that thing may be taken.
Those with a short span don't last a year,
those with a long span don't last through many.
Among the greatest some will be spoken of for ten thousand years,
whereas the tiniest may be mocked right in the moment.

Now the macaque is among the most minor,
still bound up among the lesser sort.
Its body is in many ways like ours, but it is not of our kind,
its form is strange and not pure.
Outside it is clever, but within there is no sense of measure,
indeed a human face and a beast's mind.
Its nature is narrow and shallow, yet it seeks favor,
like Han Fei imprisoned in Qin.[1]
It lifts its brows and frequently moans,
like artful words pretending to be true.
Screened off from the thick multitudes of its own kind,
it is as when the tree was cut down and he lost his community.[2]

1 The philosopher Han Fei was sent as an envoy of Han to the state of Qin, and the King of Qin wanted to employ him. Qin's minister Li Si said that he would remain loyal to Han and should be killed. The King of Qin had him thrown into prison.

2 The reference is to Confucius in Song, practicing ritual under a tree with his disciples; an officer of Song wanted to kill Confucius and cut the tree down. When he went to Zheng, he became separated from his disciples and stood outside the eastern gate alone. Someone remarked to Zigong that there was someone standing by himself outside the eastern gate looking like a dog that had lost his home.

整衣冠而偉服兮，
懷項王之思歸，
耽嗜慾而眄視兮，
有長卿之妍姿。
舉頭吻而作態兮，
動可增而自新。
沐蘭湯而滋穢兮，
匪宋朝之媚人。
終蚩弄而處紲兮，
雖近習而不親。
多才伎其何爲？
固受垢而貌侵。
姿便捷而好技兮，
超趌騰躍乎巖岑。
既□□□東避兮，
遂中囧而被尋。
嬰徽纏以拘制兮，
顧西山而長吟。
緣榱桷以容與兮，
志豈忘乎鄧林？

1 When Xiang Yu had burned the Qin palace in Xianyang, he wanted to go back to his hometown, commenting: “If one becomes wealthy and noble but doesn’t return to his hometown, it is like wearing embroidery when out walking at night—who will know it?” This was criticized by someone, who commented that people from Chu are said to be “bathed monkeys wearing caps.”

It straightens its clothing and cap, a strange array,
evoking King Xiang Yu longing to go home.[1]
Mired in sensual desires it peers around,
with the handsome looks of Sima Xiangru.[2]
It raises its head and mouth and assumes a pose,
when it changes to a hateful look, it then corrects itself.
Bathed in eupatorium water it becomes even more stinky,
no charmer like Zhao of Song.[3]
It ends up mocked and abused and placed in ropes,
though there is familiarity, there is no affection.
What good do its many devices do?—
indeed it only gets humiliated, and looks short and ugly.
Its manner nimble and clever, and it loves showing off its skill,
it leaps up over cliffs and spires.
Having . . . fled eastward,
then on the middle peak it was caught.
Wound around with cords, it was tied and restrained,
it looked around to the western mountain and gave a long moan.
It goes along rafters and beams at ease,
but how can it ever forget Deng Woods?

2 A writer of the Western Han famous for his dashing manner and for eloping with a widow, Zhuo Wenjun.

3 Famous for his good looks and mentioned in the *Analects*. Prince Zhao was equally famous for his licentious behavior.

庶君子之嘉惠，
設奇視以盡心。
且須臾以永日，
焉逸豫而自矜？
斯伏死于堂下，
長滅沒乎形神。

It hopes for the grace of the good man,
and spends itself setting forth strange sights.
By these moments it passes the days,
how can it boast of relaxed ease?
It gives up its life at the foot of the hall,
spirit and body gone forever.

清思賦

余以爲形之可見，
非色之美；
音之可聞，
非聲之善。
昔黄帝登仙于荊山之上，
振咸池于南□之岡，
鬼神其幽，
而夔牙不聞其章。
女娃耀榮于東海之濱，
而翩翻于洪西之旁，
林石之隕從，
而瑤臺不照其光。
是以微妙無形，
寂寞無聽，
然後乃可以
覩窈窕而淑清。
故白日麗光，
則[季]后不步其容；

1 Kui was the chief musician of the sage-king Shun. Bo Ya was a famous zither player of antiquity. That is, Xianchi was the supreme music but it was never heard.

2 The daughter of the mythical ruler Yandi, Nüwa, drowned in the Eastern Sea and was transformed into the *jingwei* bird, which carried wood and stones and dropped them in the ocean to fill it up.

Poetic Exposition on Purifying My Longings

As I understand it, forms that may be seen
are not the most beautiful of appearances;
tones that may be heard
are not the finest of sounds.
Long ago when the Yellow Emperor ascended to the immortals over Jing Mountain,
he set forth the Xianchi music on the crests of Southern [. . .],
an isolation with only wraiths and spirits;
yet Kui and Bo Ya did not hear that piece.[1]
Nüwa shone gloriously on the shores of the Eastern Sea[2]
and flew about beside the flood's western edge,
with a plummeting of forest wood and stone;
yet Onyx Terrace did not gleam with her light.[3]
Thus the elusively fine has no visible form,
what is hidden in isolated silence cannot be listened to:
only in this can you
catch sight of withdrawn beauty and purity.
Thus when the bright sun gives splendid light,
Empress Li will not pace in her beauty;[4]

3 That is, Nüwa was the beautiful woman that was never seen. Onyx Terrace was built for the lovely daughter of the Yousong house in high antiquity.

4 The emendation makes the line an allusion to Han Emperor Wu's favorite, Lady Li. After she died, the emperor yearned for her and had a magician call back her spirit by night. There was a curtained enclosure, and a figure appeared walking in the enclosure, a figure that looked very much like Lady Li; but the emperor could not look closely. She was posthumously made Emperor Wu's empress.

鍾鼓闆鈴，
則延子不揚其聲。
夫清虛寥廓，
則神物來集；
飄遙怳惚，
則洞幽貫冥；
冰心玉質，
則皦潔思存；
恬淡無欲，
則泰志適情。
伊衷慮之遒好兮，
又焉處而靡逞？
寒風邁于黍穀兮，
[父]誨子而遊鶺。
申孺悲而母歸兮，
吳鴻哀而象生。
茲感激以達神，
豈浩漾而弗營。

1 A royal Music Master. See Additional Notes.
2 See p. 149, note 3.
3 This is a story appearing both in *Lüshi chunqiu* and *Liezi* about a young man who would go to the seashore, and the dragonflies (or gulls) would gather around him. The father heard of this and instructed his son to catch one and bring it to him. When the young man went to carry out his father's command, the dragonflies (or gulls) would not come near him.

when bells and drums clang and boom,
Master Yan does not make a sound.[1]
When there is pure emptiness, vast and void,
spirit beings gather;
when drifting along in a blur,
one penetrates to the hidden and the darkly mysterious;
when the mind is like ice and substance of jade,
thoughts abide in perfect purity;
when one is calm and contented without desires,
grand purposes suit one's mood.
Inward concerns are good to the end,
how can they stay there and not be revealed?
A cold wind passed over the millet and grain;[2]
the father instructed the son, and the dragonflies roamed on;[3]
Shen Xi, a youth, was grieved, and his mother returned;[4]
Wu Hong lamented and a sign appeared.[5]
These are cases of how strong stirring reached the spirit-world,
how could it be a vast flood and not have its measure?[6]

4 In this story from *Lüshi chunqiu*, the mother of Shen Xi disappeared and her son longed for her. He heard a beggar singing at the gate, was deeply touched, and had her brought in. It turned out to be his mother.

5 This is a story in *Wu Yue chunqiu* 吳越春秋 about how the Wu king Helü wanted his smiths to make him billhooks, offering a rich reward for the best. One greedy smith killed his two sons, one of whose names was Wu Hong, and used their blood to temper two billhooks. He took these to the palace to get his reward. Helü could not tell these billhooks from all the other ones he had received, so the smith addressed them by name, telling them that the king could not see their spirits. The two billhooks immediately flew into the air and struck their father in the chest.

6 That is, how could these events be inexplicable?

志不覬而神正，
心不蕩而自誠。
固秉一而內修，
堪粵止之匪傾。
惟清朝而夕晏兮，
指蒙汜以永寧。
是時羲和既頹，
玄夜始扃。
望舒整轡，
素風來征。
輕帷連颺，
華裀肅清。
彭蚌微吟，
螻蛄徐鳴。
望南山之崔巍兮，
顧北林之葱菁。
太陰潛乎後房兮，
明月耀乎前庭。
迺申展而缺寐兮，
忽一悟而自驚。

One's aims are not full of hopes, yet the spirit is upright;
the heart is not swept away and is genuine of itself.
Hold firmly to unity and perfect yourself within,
take care to be at rest and not to be swayed.
Consider the cool dawns and evening's clear skies,
point to Mengsi and be ever at peace.[1]
When Xihe has sunk down,[2]
in black night the gate is first barred.
Wangshu straightens his reins,[3]
and the pale autumn wind comes faring on.
The light curtains are continuously lifted by the breeze,
the splendid bedding is pure and in good order.
Crabs and clams hum faintly,
the mole-cricket slowly sings.
I gaze to the towering southern mountains,
I look around to the rich verdure of the northern woods.
Supreme Yin is hidden by the rear chambers,
the bright moon is radiant on the front courtyard.
Then I stretch out, yet sleep eludes me,
suddenly I wake entirely with a start.

1 Mengsi is where the sun rises.

2 Xihe is the driver of the sun carriage.

3 Wangshu drives the moon.

焉長靈以遂寂兮，
將有歙乎所之。
意流蕩而改慮兮，
心震動而有思。
若有來而可接兮，
若有去而不辭。
心恍忽而失度，
情散越而靡治。
豈覺察而明真兮，
誠雲夢其如茲。
驚奇聲之異造兮，
鑒殊色之在斯。
開丹山之琴瑟兮，
聆崇陵之參差。
始徐唱而微響兮，
情悄慧以蟉蛇。

遂招雲以致氣兮，
乃振動而大駭。
聲飂飂以洋洋，
若登崑崙而臨西海。
超遙茫渺，
不能究其所在。

How could my extending spirit consequently be stilled?
There will be something to inhale where I am going.[1]
My thoughts were swept along and my concerns changed,
my mind was deeply shaken and I did have longings.
It was as if someone came and might be received;
as if someone went away and did not take leave.
My mind was a blur and lost all measure,
my passions were stirred up and not to be controlled.
I could not consider things reflectively and see the truth clearly,
indeed a cloud and a dream are such as this.
I was astonished by the strange approach of wondrous sounds,
I divined remarkable sensuous beauty right here.
Zithers large and small began to play on Cinnabar Mountain,
and I heard the panpipes on the lofty hills.
Then slow singing began with faint echoes,
and my feelings had a melancholy clarity as they were borne along.

Consequently I summoned clouds and brought vapors,
then was shaken and greatly startled.
The sounds was howling and vastly flooding,
as if climbing the Kunlun Mountains, looking out over the Western Sea.
A blurry, boundless immensity,
and I could not reckon where I was.

1 Probably referring to Daoist breathing techniques, especially inhaling celestial vapors.

心瀁瀁而無所終薄兮,
思悠悠而未半。
鄧林殪于大澤兮,
欽邳悲于瑤岸。
徘徊夷由兮,
猗靡廣衍。

遊平圃以長望兮,
乘修水之華旂。
長思肅以永至兮,
滌平衢之大夷。
循路曠以徑通兮,
辟閨闥而洞闈。
羨要眇之飄遊兮,
倚東風以揚輝。
沐洧淵以淑密兮,
體清潔而靡譏。
厭白玉以爲面兮,
披丹霞以爲衣。
襲九英之曜精兮,
珮瑤光以發徽。
服儵煜以繽紛兮,
綷衆采以相綏。

The mind was swept off and finally approached nothing,
thoughts went on and on without getting anywhere.
As Kuafu of Deng Woods perished by the Great Marsh,[1]
as Yinpi came to grief at Yao Slope.[2]
Pacing about, hesitating, uncertain,
fondly yearning, aimlessly wind-whirled.

I roamed to Ping Garden and gazed long,[3]
with floriate banners and bells I rode the long stream.
My long broodings were serious and came continuously,
I cleansed the great flat space of the level crossroads.
I went along the road's vastness and directly got through,
I opened the doors to the inner chambers and the deep-set entries.[4]
I yearned for the elusive beauty wafting about,
she leaned into the east wind and gave off a glow.
She washed her hair in the pure recesses of the Wei River's gulf,
her body was pristine and none could fault her.
She applied white jade to her face,
she donned cinnabar auroras as robes.
Clothed in the shining essence of the Nine Blooms,
she hung Onyx Rays from her sash to show the subtle.[5]
She was robed in a thick flurry of flashing light,
she clustered a host of bright hues to ease.

1 This is Kuafu, who raced the sun and died of thirst. His staff, moistened by Kuafu's body oils, grew into Deng Woods.

2 Yinpi (or Qinpi) was a figure in the *Shanhai jing*, who helped kill Baojiang and was subsequently executed by the High God. Then he transformed into a bird of prey called the E 鶚.

3 Ping Garden was the dwelling of the Heavenly Emperor.

4 This suggests the women's quarters in a palace.

5 Onyx Rays was the seventh star in the handle of the Big Dipper.

色熠熠以流爛兮，
紛雜錯以葳蕤。
象朝雲之一合兮，
似變化之相依。
麾常儀使先好兮，
命河女以胥歸。
步容與而特進兮，
眄兩楹而升墀。
振瑤谿而鳴玉兮，
播陵陽之斐斐。
蹈消淶之危迹兮，
躡離散之輕微。
釋安朝之朱履兮，
踐席假而集帷。
敷斯來之在室兮，
乃飄忽之所晞。
馨香發而外揚兮，
媚顏灼以顯姿。
清言竊其如蘭兮，
辭婉娩而靡違。

The colors scintillated and spread all around,
a flurried admixture swelling about her.
It resembled the clouds of dawn all coming together,
like transformations, each adjoined to the next.
I directed Changyi to make all well in advance,
I commanded the River Girl to await my return.[1]
I paced on at my ease and advanced upright,
looking aside at the paired columns, I ascended the raised platform.
I shook my ringing jades of Onyx Creek,
I spread out the bright patterns of Lingyang.[2]
I paced with lofty footsteps in insouciant ease,
I strode with delicacy in a relaxed gait.
I took off the vermillion shoes of Anqi,[3]
I stepped on the mat . . . and [roosted by] the curtains,
Unrolled [that one's coming in the chamber],[4]
then in a flash she vanished.
The aroma came forth and wafted outward,
the beguiling countenance bright, revealing her beauty.
Her pure talk was beguiling, like eupatorium,
her phrases were soft and yielding and did not miss the mark.

1 This refers to the Weaver Woman constellation in the Milky Way, the River of Stars.

2 A musical piece.

3 An immortal. See Additional Notes.

4 The text seems to be garbled in these lines.

託精靈之運會兮，
浮日月之餘暉。
假淳氣之精微兮，
幸備嬿以自私。
願申愛于今夕兮，
尚有訪乎是非。
被芬芳之夕暢兮，
將暫往而永歸。
觀悦懌而未靜兮，
言未究而心悲。
嗟雲霓之可憑兮，
翻揮翼而俱飛。

棄中堂之局促兮，
遺戶牖之不處。
帷幕張而靡御兮，
几筵設而莫拊。

載雲輿之晻靄兮，
乘夏后之兩龍。

The moment had come for entrusting the soul,[1]
floating in the lingering glow of sun and moon.
I availed myself of the refined subtlety of pure breath,
fortunate to have the full complement of beauty for my very own.
I wished to express my doting love on that very evening,
but there was still the rightness of it to consider.
Covered in the sweet fragrance extending in evening,
I was ready to go off for a while and be with her forever.
But considering these pleasures, I was not at ease,
and before I finished speaking, the heart was sad.
I sighed, wondering if clouds and rainbows could be relied on,
beating our wings and flying off together.

I left the cramped space of the central hall,
abandoned the windowed room and did not abide.
The curtains and hangings were hung, but I did not enter them,
armrest and mat were set out, but I did not set hand on them.

I bore the darkening mist of my cloud carriage,
I drove the two dragons of Xiahou.[2]

1 In poetic expositions on encountering the goddess, such as "The Poetic Exposition on the Goddess," attributed to Song Yu, at the moment the suitor and the goddess are about to get together, the goddess suddenly changes her mind and leaves him in despair. Poetic expositions on stilling the passions, of which this is one, are closely related, with the difference being that it is the man who rejects the woman.

2 The surname of the descendants of sage-king Yu, who founded the Xia dynasty. The *Shanhai jing* speaks of Xiahou Qi driving two dragons for his carriage in the great wilderness of the east in the outlands.

折丹木以蔽陽兮，
竦芝蓋之三重。
翩翼翼以左右兮，
紛悠悠以容容。

瞻朝霞之相承兮，
似美人之懷憂。
采色雜以成文兮，
忽離散而不留。
若將言之未發兮，
又氣變而飄浮。

若垂髦而失鬋兮，
飾未集而形消。
目流眄而自別兮，
心欲來而貌遼。

紛綺靡而未盡兮，
先列宿之規矩。
時黨莽而陰曀兮，
忽不識乎舊宇。
邁黃妖之崇臺兮，
雷師奮而下雨。
內英哲與長年兮，
答離倫與膺賈。

I snapped boughs of cinnabar trees to block the sunlight,
I raised three layers of a mushroom canopy.
I flew winging this way and that,
in a flurry on and on, in shifting billows.

I gazed on the continuity of the dawn auroras,
like the beautiful woman harboring cares.
Their hues and colors mixed to form patterns,
then suddenly they drifted apart and did not remain.
As if about to speak but no voice came forth,
then again the atmosphere changed and they floated away.

Like bangs hanging down and tresses disappearing,
before adornments coalesce, the form melted away.
The eyes gave a sweeping look and parted,
the heart wanted to come, but the visible body was too remote.

Tender beauty was everywhere, not yet gone,
preceding the standard order of the constellations.
The moment seemed murky and cloud-covered,
suddenly I could not make out my former lodging.
I went off to the lofty terrace of the Yellow Fiend,[1]
the Thundermaster was roused and sent down rain.
I would accept those of splendid talent and long years,
and flog Departs-from-Norms and Merchant-of-False-Wares.

1 This is unclear, but seems to refer to a concentrated yellow vapor that portends something.

摧魍魎而折鬼神兮，
直徑登乎所期。
歷四方而縱懷兮，
誰云顧乎或疑。
超高躍而疾騖，
至北極而放之。
援間維以相示兮，
臨寒門而長辭。
既不以萬物累心兮，
豈一女子之足思。

I would shatter the Wangliang Monster and break the gods and demons,
ascending straight up to what I aspired to;
I would pass through all the directions, let my cares run freely,
who could look around in confusion and doubt?
I would pass over, leaping on high, and gallop headlong,
reaching the northernmost pole, let it go.
I would lay hold of the position of the Xian stars and show it,
looking out on the Gate of Cold, take leave forever.
Now that I would not burden my heart with the myriad things,
how could a single woman be worth longing for?

亢父賦

吾嘗遊亢父，登其城，使人愁思；作賦以詆之，言不足樂也。

亢父者，九州之窮地，
先代之幽墟者也。
故其城郭卑小局促，
危隘不遐；
其土田則汙除漸淤，
泥涅槃洿。
方池邊屬兮容水滂沱，
穢菜惟痤兮不食實多，
地下沈陰兮受氣匪和，
太陽不周兮殖物靡嘉。
故其人民頑嚚檮杌，
下愚難化。

其區域壅絕斷塞，
分迫旋淵，
終始同貫，
本末相牽，
疇昔訖今，
曠世歷年。

Poetic Exposition on Kangfu

I once visited Kangfu, climbing its city wall. It made a person have sad thoughts. I wrote a poetic exposition to defame it, telling that the place provides no joy.

Kangfu is the poorest place of all the Nine Regions,
from former ages a remote ruin of a city.
Its town walls are small, stubby, and cramped,
teetering and narrow, they don't go far,
its fields are fetid, low, and mucky,
a stagnant basin of black mud.
Adjacencies on the edge of square ponds let water flood over,
producing a mix of vegetation, most of which is inedible.
The lower ground is sunk in shadow, receiving incompatible air,
the sun does not reach everywhere, and what grows there is not good.
Thus its people are stubborn, raucous, and vile,
base, stupid, and beyond civilizing.

The region is cut off and blocked,
split, pressed, encircled by still deeps,
all the same from the beginning,
consequence tied to origin,
from ancient days until now,
for long generations through the years.

鉅野瀦其後,
窮齊盡其前,
甽澮不暢,
垢濁實臻,
不肖群聚,
屋空無賢。
故其民放散淆亂,
藪竄澤居,
比迹麋鹿,
齊志豪貙。
是以其原壤不辟,
樹藝希疏,
莧葦彌皋,
蚑虻慘膚也。

于其遠險,
則右金鄉而左高平,
崇陵崔巍,
深溪崢嶸;
美類不處,
熊虎是生,
故人民被害嚼齧,
禽性獸情。

Juye bogs it from behind,
the impoverished Ji stretches across its whole front.
Field ditches do not extend,
filthy waters indeed gather here;
crowds of the basest sort congregate,
houses are bare of worthy men.
Thus its folk are scattered and a mixed breed,
hiding away in swamps, dwelling in marshes,
they walk with elks and deer,
equal in purpose to the porcupine and bobcat.
Thus their plains are not cleared for farming,
their trees and plantings are scraggly,
amaranth and reeds fill their lowlands,
mosquitoes and horseflies distress the skin.

In that far and perilous place
there is Jinxiang to the right and Gaoping to the left,
majestic hills towering,
deep-set creeks down sheer heights.
Nothing lovely lodges here,
here grow tiger and bear.
Thus its folk suffer harm and are bitten and gnawed,
endowed with the nature of birds and beasts.

爾之近阻，
則鳴鳩蔭其前，
曲城發其後。
鴟梟群翔之可悼，
豈有志于須臾。
故其人民狼風豺氣，
鼇黿無厚。

南望春申，
東瞻孟嘗，
袤界薛邑，
境邊山陽；
逆旅行舍，
姦盜所藏。
北臨平陸，
齊之西封；
捷徑燕趙，
逃遁逍遙；
故其人民側匿頗僻，
隱蔽不公，
懷私抱詐，

Its closest fastness
has Singing Doves shadowing it in front,
and Qu City coming forth behind it.
Owls flying around in flocks are lamentable,
how could they intend to give ease and contentment?
Thus its folk have the temperament of wolves and wild dogs,
brutal and unkind.

To the south it looks out on Chunshen,
to the east it has a view of Mengchang,[1]
its axial border is Xue Town,
Shanyang lies on its frontier,
with inns and hostels that conceal
places where scoundrels and robbers hide.
To the north it looks out on the town Pinglu,
the western frontier of Qi;
it is a quick route to Yan and Zhao
for running away to be free.
Thus its folk are lewd and wicked,
secretive, not fair-minded,
harboring personal advantage and cheating schemes,

1 Two famous feudal domains in the Warring States.

爽匿是從，
禮義不設，
淳化匪同。

64 先哲遺言，
有昭有聾。
如何君子，
棲遲斯邦！

following error and evil;
ritual and righteousness are not established,
not sharing the same as pure civilizing force.

64 Wise men of old have left us words:
there are those who are bright; there are those who are deaf.
How is it that a good man
lingers in this land?

Abbreviations

Beitang Shuchao	Yu Shinan 虞世南, compiler. *Beitang shuchao* 北堂書鈔. Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 1998.
Chen Bojun	Chen Bojun 陳伯君. *Ruan Ji ji jiaozhu* 阮籍集校注. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987.
Chuxue ji	Xu Jian 徐堅, compiler. *Chuxue ji* 初學記. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980. Often reprinted and many editions. Referred to by *juan* number.
Guo Guang	Guo Guang 郭光, *Ruan Ji ji jiaozhu* 阮籍集校注. Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1991.
Holzman	Holzman, Donald. *Poetry and Politics: The Life and Works of Juan Chi A.D. 210–263*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
Huang Jie	Huang Jie 黃節. *Ruan bubing Yonghuai shi zhu* 阮步兵詠懷詩注. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1957.
Jin Jicang	Jin Jicang 靳極蒼. *Ruan Ji Yonghuai shi xiangjie* 阮籍詠懷詩詳解. Taiyuan: Shanxi guji chubanshe, 1999.
Li Zhijun	Li Zhijun 李志鈞, Ji Changhua 季昌華, Chai Yuying 柴玉英, and Peng Dahua 彭大華, collated and punctuated. *Ruan Ji ji* 阮籍集. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978. The text followed here is the 1543 edition by Fan Qin 范欽 and Chen Dewen 陳德文. Li Zhijun and his colleagues collated this with other early sources.
Lu Qinli	Lu Qinli 逯欽立, ed. *Xian-Qin Han Wei Jin nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩. 3 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983.
Mather	Liu Yiqing, *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World*. Second edition. With commen-

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tary by Liu Chün. Translated with introduction and notes by Richard B. Mather. Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2002.

Owen 1992 — Owen, Stephen. *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*. Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1992.

Owen 2006 — Owen, Stephen. *The Making of Early Chinese Classical Poetry*. Cambridge: Harvard Asia Center, 2006.

Wen xuan — Xiao Tong 蕭統, ed. *Wen xuan* 文選. Often reprinted and many editions. Referred to by *juan* number.

Yiwen leiju — Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢, ed. *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982. Often reprinted and many editions. Referred to by *juan* number.

Zhong Jingduo — Zhong Jingduo 鍾京鐸. *Ruan Ji Yonghuai shi zhu* 阮籍詠懷詩注. Taibei: Xuehai chubanshe, 2002.

Additional Notes

Singing My Cares

The Five-syllable-line Poems

1

Li Zhijun 83; Lu Qinli 496; *Wen xuan* 23; *Yiwen leiju* 26; Chen Bojun 200; Jin Jicang 2; Huang Jie 1. Partial citation in *Chuxue ji* 1 (1–4), *Wenjing mifu lun* 文鏡秘府論 South (1–6), *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 700 (3–4). Holzman 229.

1 This is almost exactly the same as Wang Can's 王粲 "Seven Sorrows" 七哀: 獨夜不能寐, 攝衣起撫琴. See Owen 2006, 77–92.

2 *Ming qin* 鳴琴 is literally "sounding zither." This is a commonly used phrase for a zither when two characters are needed, a "formulaic epithet."

3 *Jian* 鑒, literally "mirror" or "reflect" and translated as "gave the image of," may be also "caught the light of." The point here is that the shape of the moon can be seen through the *thin* curtain, as in a mirror image.

6 The astute early Qing critic Wu Qi 吳淇 (*jinshi* 1658) notes that birds do not normally fly around at night and that this is due to the brightness of the moon.

2

Li Zhijun 83; Lu Qinli 503; Chen Bojun 317; Jin Jicang 131; Huang Jie, 45. L. 1 cited in *Wen xuan* commentary. Holzman 129.

1 Huang reads 難/艱.

4 We would like this to gesture to arcane discourse, and indeed "formlessness," *wuxing* 無形, is amply attested in its texts. I would assign such a reading a higher probability; but in the context of what follows, we might keep in mind *shi yu wuxing* 視於無形 in the first *juan* of "Quli" 曲禮 in the *Li ji*: looking for the deceased parent and seeing no physical presence. In this case we would read it in the context of the many anecdotes surrounding the death of Ruan Ji's mother, in which Ruan spat blood and became dangerously emaciated, while eating and drinking copiously in conspicuous violation

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of mourning ritual. An anecdote in *Shishuo xinyu* has a Confucian attacking his behavior at a feast held by Sima Zhao. Sima Zhao defended Ruan Ji on the grounds that he had become seriously emaciated (23.2; Mather 400). The poem would fit this context: the desire to deny troubles by roaming free, but becoming caught in intense depression.

3

Li Zhijun 84; Lu Qinli 503; Chen Bojun 318; Jin Jicang 133; Huang Jie 46. Line 6 cited in *Wen xuan* 31 commentary. Holzman 130.

1 *Gushi ji* 古詩紀 reads 晨/辰. These words are not only homophones but essentially the same word, acquiring a radical to mark its use in a limiting context. “Evening” in line four marks an interval, so the restricted sense of “morning” seems best.

2 Zeng Guofan 曾國藩 (1811–1872) suggests 零雨 should be 靈雨 (cited in Chen Bojun 318). These are homophones and both compounds are common. This suggests a mere graphic preference.

6 Li Shan, annotating Jiang Yan’s 江淹 (444–505) imitation in *Wen xuan* 31, cites the line as 蕩漾焉可能, with 能 read as *tai* (態).

8 Fan Qin originally reads 與/語. Li Zhijun emends on the basis of the Li Mengyang edition.

4

Li Zhijun 85; Lu Qinli 496; *Wen xuan* 23; *Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠 2; Chen Bojun 212; Jin Jicang 8; Huang Jie 2. Cited in *Yiwen leiju* 18 (1–10); *Chuxue ji* 19 (1–4, 7–8, and 1–10); *Taiping yulan* 381(1–4). Holzman 120.

Shen Yue’s comment here is of interest: “Youthful beauty will not be forgotten for a thousand years; a bond as firm as metal and stone may be casually severed in a single morning. ‘I have never seen a love of virtue that is as strong as the love of a beautiful appearance.’” 婉孌則千載不忘，金石之交，一旦輕絕，未見好德如好色. This refers to *Analects* 15: “He said: ‘It’s over. I have never seen anyone with a love of virtue as strong as the love of a beautiful appearance.’” 子曰: 已矣乎. 吾未見好德如好色者也.

1 The use of *fei* 妃 here suggests that he knew the version of the story in *Liexian zhuan*. There they are the “river nymphs,” *jiangfei* 江妃. *Yutai xinyong* and *Yiwen leiju* read 從/順.

3 *Yutai xinyong* reads 解/懷. *Wen xuan, Chuxue ji* and *Taiping yulan* read 玉/環.

4 *Wanluan* 婉孌 would describe the nymphs or Zheng Jiaofu more properly than the pendants.

6 *Yiwen leiju* var. 歲/載.

10–12 This follows the woman speaker in the *Shijing* "Bo xi" 伯兮. Her husband is in the east, campaigning with the king. She complains that her hair is a mess: "Of course I have hair-oil, / but for whom should I adorn myself?" 豈無膏沐, 誰適為容. She continues in the third stanza: "Hoping for rain, hoping for rain, / but brightly the sun comes up." 其雨其雨, 杲杲出日. This seems to refer to the dashed hopes for her husband's return. The beginning of the fourth stanza takes us back to line 10: "How can I get the herb of forgetting, / and plant it behind my chamber." 焉得諼草, 言樹之背. The "herb of forgetting" is the pivot of this peculiar shift from the disappointed man to the disappointed woman. In line ten it is the answer to Zheng Jiaofu's inability to forget the nymphs "for a thousand years." The reference inexorably leads to "Bo xi," where it is a loyal wife longing for her absent husband.

14 *Yutai xinyong* reads 便/更.

Critics have long pondered what is going on here. What we seem to have is rather a conflict of codes, rhetorical association, and Ruan Ji's personal obsession with betrayal. The river nymphs are goddesses. Ruan Ji had read "The Goddess" ("Shennü fu" 神女賦) and Cao Zhi's "The Goddess of the Luo" ("Luo shen fu" 洛神賦), along with a dozen other poetic expositions on the goddess that now survive only in fragments. The goddess always lures the man; she always rejects the man; the man is always left in a state of helpless longing. "The Goddess of the Luo" develops this as a fundamental incompatibility between gods and mortals. Ruan Ji goes succinctly through the phases, but then strangely links the goddess to the *femme fatale* in the mortal world. The desire to forget then casts him into the *Shijing*, and into the woman longing for her husband to return from campaign. The conclusion is an odd association because a mortal liaison with a goddess is never "a bond firm as metal and stone." In "Bo xi" the man has not betrayed his wife; he is detained in service.

5

Li Zhijun 85; Lu Qinli 497; *Wen xuan* 23; Chen Bojun 216; Jin Jicang 13; Huang Jie 4. Cited in *Yiwen leiju* 26 (1–2). Holzman 155.

7 Fan Qin reads 馳/驅.

6

Li Zhijun 85; Lu Qinli 497; *Wen xuan* 23; *Yiwen leiju* 26; Chen Bojun 219; Jin Jicang 16; Huang Jie 6. Cited in *Chuxue ji* 2 (5–8). Holzman 158.

1 Gu Dayou 顧大猷 reads 征/北; Wu Ne 吳訥 reads 郭/北.

3 Wuchen reads 訖/託.

7

Li Zhijun 86; Lu Qinli 497; *Wen xuan* 23; *Yiwen leiju* 26; Chen Bojun 222; Jin Jicang 19; Huang Jie 7. Holzman 224.

4 Other configurations of "the Zhaos and Lis" (or simply "Zhao and Li") have been suggested. This is one of those cases when not only is the precise referent forever uncertain (because of too many potential claimants), but it is also immaterial. It simply refers to those with wealth and power due to imperial favor. Chen Bojun takes this as Li Si, the minister of Qin, and Zhao Gao, the eunuch minister who succeeded Li Si.

8 Since the speaker, approaching the Taihang Range, is clearly going east from the Chang'an region, we must take "looking back" to the "Three Rivers region" as the general area to the west around Qin. It has been variously identified, but elementary geography places constraints on the identifications.

12 Or "I have lost my way, what shall I do?"

8

Li Zhijun 86; Lu Qinli 497; *Wen xuan* 23; Chen Bojun 229; Jin Jicang 23; Huang Jie 8. Cited in *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 19 (1–4); *Yiwen leiju* 87 (1–6); *Chuxue ji* (1–4); *Taiping yulan* 978 (1–4). Holzman 116.

9

Li Zhijun 87; Lu Qinli 498; *Wen xuan* 23; Chen Bojun 232; Jin Jicang 27; Huang Jie 9. Holzman 132.

4 A number of early editions read 清/青.

6 A number of early editions read 參差/差馳.

9 *Liuchao shiji* reads 平生/卒歡.

10

Li Zhijun 87; Lu Qinli 498; *Wen xuan* 23; Chen Bojun 235; Jin Jicang 30; Huang Jie 11. Holzman 117.

5 *Liuchao shiji* reads 常/尚. Li Shan's explanation from *Han Feizi* 韓非子 has the *zhouzhou* holding its own feathers, but, of course, this makes no sense. Chen Bojun cites a passage in *Zhuangzi*, referring to holding the feathers of another bird. This works well with the following line as a figure of mutual dependence.

9 Most versions read this line: 豈為夸譽名 "Why should one boast of praise and fame?" Wuchen reads 與/譽, and Chen Bojun argues persuasively that this is correct, based on the parallel in 59.

13 Fan Qin reads 西海/四海.

11

Li Zhijun 88; Lu Qinli 498; *Wen Xuan* 23; *Yiwen leiju* 26; Chen Bojun 240; Jin Jicang 34; Huang Jie 12. Cited in *Shuijing zhu* 16 (1–2); *Chuxue ji* 3 (5–8). Holzman 25.

1 Cited in *Shuijing zhu* as 朝/步.

2 Cited in *Shuijing zhu* and *Yiwen leiju* as 遙/北.

6 I translate this as referring to the speaker himself, but it could refer to Bo Yi and Shu Qi. The rest of the poem could be taken as an imagined scene of Bo Yi and Shu Qi in autumn, facing the coming winter and starvation.

11 Most texts read 遊 for 繇 (由), but as Huang Jie notes, Shen Yue's paraphrase shows clearly that he understood it as 由 or 繇, which is also the Wuchen reading.

12 *Qichuang* 悽愴, "miserable," is also associated with bleak cold. This is clearly the speaker's response to the situation, but it may be the quality of the cries of wild goose and cuckoo.

12

Li Zhijun 89; Lu Qinli 498; *Wen xuan* 23; Chen Bojun 247; Jin Jicang 38; Huang Jie 14. Cited in *Yiwen leiju* 26 (1–4, 7–10). Holzman 161.

1–2 Both of these links between music and a place are associated with a certain Music Master Juan 師涓; however, the historical dis-

tance between the anecdotes suggests that this cannot have been the same person. In the *Shi ji* 史記, Music Master Juan is ordered by the last Shang ruler Zhoù 紂 to play the "new tunes" and those of the Northern Wards. In the *Han Feizi* a Music Master Juan copies the playing of music by the River Pu for his master, the Duke of Wei; in the ancient kingdom of Jin, Music Master Kuang objects to this music being played, since it is the "tones of a state about to fall" 亡國之音 and could only have been gotten "by the River Pu."

3 Wuchen reads 遊閑/閑遊.

4 Wuchen reads 作/乍.

10 Li Shan *Wen xuan* and some editions read 以/用.

13

Li Zhijun 89; Lu Qinli 498; *Wen xuan* 23; Chen Bojun 251; Jin Jicang 43; Huang Jie 16. Holzman 32.

12 Many later editions read 淚/涕.

14

Li Zhijun 90; Lu Qinli 500; Chen Bojun 276; Jin Jicang 67; Huang Jie 24. Holzman 211.

1 Huang Jie cites the "Heaven's Patterns Instruction" 天文訓 of the Western Han work *Huainanzi* 淮南子 here. The Wei poet Miao Xi 繆襲 (186–245) has a similar line in a "Coffin Bearer's Song" ("Wan ge" 輓歌): "The bright sun enters Yu Gulf, / the hanging coach rests its team of four" 白日入虞淵，懸車息駟馬.

4 *Liuchao shiji* reads 日/夕.

7 Various editions read 放/知. Huang Kan 黃侃 thinks 知 is a mistake for 如 (cited Chen Bojun 276). Note *Feng ya yi* reads 豈知. The text as it is makes the best sense.

12 Var. 曠世/歎息.

15

Li Zhijun 90; Lu Qinli 500; Chen Bojun 280; Jin Jicang 71; Huang Jie 25. Cited in *Yiwen leiju* 18 (1–4); *Taiping yulan* 381 (1–4) and 816 (1–4). Holzman 144.

This poem is built of rephrased lines from the extant corpus of earlier classical poetry. A survey of the range of variants when there are multiple sources for such poems reminds us that, with some exceptions, Ruan Ji's

versions are not "alluding" to specific texts, but using pieces of a repertoire. This is not to say that this work is still part of that repertoire, but rather that he uses the received poetic repertoire in unique ways. If in line three he says "The robes that she wears are of delicate gossamer" 被服纖羅衣, he is not alluding to "Nineteen Old Poems" XII that contains the line, "The robes and skirt she wears are of gossamer" 被服羅裳衣; rather, it is a legitimate variation in the description of the beautiful woman.

2 *Taiping yulan* reads 如/白.

4 Fan Qin reads 被 or 祓/珮; the reading above follows *Yiwen leiju* and Li Mengyang. *Yiwen leiju* reads 璫/璜.

7 Fan Qin reads 眄/眺.

8 Li Zhijun emends 當/向 on the basis of the Li Mengyang preface edition.

12 Fan Qin and some other subsequent editions read 盼/眄.

16

Li Zhijun 91; Lu Qinli 499; *Wen xuan* 23; *Yutai xinyong* 2; Chen Bojun 256; Jin Jicang 46; Huang Jie 17. Cited in *Yiwen leiju* 33 (1–10). Holzman 123.

Holzman takes the Lords of Anling and Longyang as each other's lover, admittedly anachronistically. Rather, these are distinct, parallel cases, with their respective rulers as the implied beloved.

2 The note for the translation gives what is essential for the poem in these stories; however, the source stories are more complex, and in both cases the kings' catamites are not blind in enjoying the favor of their lords, but rather become memorable for their stratagems to control the fickleness of royal favor. The story of the Lord of Anling is found in several sources, including the "Chu ce" 楚策 of the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 and the Western Han work *Shuo yuan* 說苑. These two versions differ significantly in detail, but they center on the warning of Jiang Yi 江乙 that the king had rewarded Anling (here named Chan 纏) for his beauty, and would cast him off when his beauty faded. He advised Chan to promise to accompany the king in death. At an opportune moment Chan did so, deepening the king's favor. For this he was made Lord of Anling. The story of the Lord of Longyang appears in the "Wei ce" 魏策 of the *Zhanguo ce*. Fishing with the King of Wei, the Lord of Longyang made a

good catch and started to weep. When the king asked him why he wept, the Lord of Longyang said that when he caught a larger fish, he wanted to throw back the smaller fish he had previously caught; that when the favor the king had showered on him became known, others of even greater charm would flock to the king seeking favor, and that consequently the king would abandon him. As with the speech of the Lord of Anling, this speech deepened the King of Wei's love for the Lord of Longyang. Ruan Ji probably had other sources for these stories as well, but he is simply using these past names to evoke the fragility of royal favor.

7 *Yutai xinyong* and *Wen xuan* read 眄/盻 (the Zhong edition reads 盻); Chen Bojun follows Chen Hang reading 盼/盻. *Xi* 盻 was commonly used in the third century for "look at." The question is whether it is indeed *xi*, glossed as "look at angrily," or is a loan writing for *pan* 盼. I have retained the orthography 盻, but translated it in its clear sense from other usages as "look at" (often with affection).

10 Li Zhijun follows *Yutai xinyong*, *Yiwen leiju*, and Li Shan *Wen xuan* reading 衾裳/衣裳, the covering of a funeral mat.

12 Li Zhijun emends Fan Qin 得 to 共, following *Wen xuan* and Li Mengyang.

17

Li Zhijun 92; Lu Qinli 499; *Wen xuan* 23; Chen Bojun 260; Jin Jicang 51; Huang Jie 19. Holzman 62.

18

Li Zhijun 92; Lu Qinli 499; *Wen xuan* 23; Chen Bojun 263; Jin Jicang 54; Huang Jie 20. Cited in *Taiping yulan* 949 (1–4). Holzman 133.

1 Most texts read 兆/肇. Li Zhijun accepts 肇. These are Middle Chinese homophones, with 兆 often used as a loan character.

4 *Taiping yulan* reads 悄然/悄悄. *Taiping yulan* reads 先/心.

5 Fan Qin reads 安/焉.

9 Fan Qin reads 對/鳴.

19

Li Zhijun 92; Lu Qinli 499; *Wen xuan* 23; Chen Bojun 265; Jin Jicang 58; Huang Jie 21. Cited in *Yiwen leiju* 26 (1–10). Holzman 163.

5 Wuchen reads 都/軒.

6 Li Shan *Wen xuan* reads 有/望.
9 Wuchen, Li Mengyang, and *Yiwen leiju* read 百歲/萬歲.
11 Fan Qin reads 娛/悟; Wuchen and Li Mengyang read 誤/悟; other editions prefer 悟. The choice between 誤 (fooled by) and 悟 (enlightened by) is a difficult one, especially because 誤 could be written 悮 (誤 and 悟 are homophones in Middle Chinese). Shen Yue's explanation cited in Li Shan shows that his text read 悟. Shen's is the oldest testimony to the text, and we are compelled to follow his reading. The reading 誤 is nevertheless attractive because of the usage in "Nineteen Old Poems" XIII: "Some swallow pills to seek the immortals, / many have been fooled by such drugs" 服食求神仙，多為藥所誤. The deceit of the promise of immortality was a contemporary trope. Although I have translated this line with 悟, as following Shen Yue's reading, I strongly suspect that 誤 (fooled by) is how the text would have been understood orally and may have been the proper reading.
12 Li Mengyang reads 令/今. Note that for *jiaojiao* 噭噭 *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大辭典 offers the gloss "the sound of laughter" 笑聲, citing this line. It is, however, usually understood as translated here. The question is how to reconcile the standard sense of *jiaojiao* 噭噭 or its variant *aoao* 嗷嗷, understood as "many voices expressing sorrow." *Jiaojiao* 噭噭 is the sound of weeping and is associated with weeping for the dead, which sits strangely beside *chi* 嗤, a sneering laugh. The two lines do connect as disillusion at the hope of immortality, the "wailing" in face of death, and mocking his earlier folly. Note that "Nineteen Old Poems" XIII also moves from tombs to death to disillusion with the promise of immortality.

20

Li Zhijun 94; Lu Qinli 499; *Wen xuan* 23; Chen Bojun 270; Jin Jicang 61; Huang Jie 22. Cited in *Yiwen leiju* 26 (1–4); *Taiping huanyu ji* 太平寰宇記 (1–2). Holzman 28.

The reference to the "Quail Fire" stars in line seven is the strongest case for a political interpretation, because otherwise it is hard to know what to make of the line in context. This, however, presumes that the poem was written after 258, when Sima Zhao became Duke of Jin. The far more interesting question is whether such a gesture to prediction would have been pleasing or displeasing to Sima Zhao.

6 Wuchen reads 自/相.

13–14 This is a quotation from *Xunzi* 荀子 17, "Discourse on Heaven," *Tianlun* 天論.

21

Li Zhijun 95; Lu Qinli 505; Chen Bojun 334; Jin Jicang 158; Huang Jie 54. Holzman 209.

1 *Chouwu* 儔物 is literally "same-category things." This is an original locution and here clearly refers to different categories of things rather than things within the same category.

7 *Qian* 千 is an interpolation where a character was missing. Huang Jie takes this as 阡 and cites a parallel usage in Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433): "Heaven's roads are not streets or avenues" 天路非術阡.

8 Fan Qin reads 春秋/三春. *San* 三 is an early interpolation where a character was missing. The earliest text probably read: 春表微光, with 春秋 and 三春 as solutions for the missing character.

22

Li Zhijun 96; Lu Qinli 505; Chen Bojun 336; Jin Jicang 161; Huang Jie 56. Cited in *Yiwen leiju* 26 (1–4). Holzman 208.

This poem presents numerous problems. The Fan Qin edition of 1543 has in this position a poem beginning with "A bluebird roamed over the sea" 青鳥海上遊, which is actually Jiang Yan's imitation of Ruan Ji in the fifth century. Other editions continued to include this poem until someone with a modicum of scholarship pointed out the error. The poem above was included in the undated Ming edition that also included Li Mengyang's preface; however, its relation to the manuscript Li Mengyang saw is uncertain.

6 The first four characters were originally missing; these are supplied in the *Gushi ji* edition of 1557. The editor simply filled in phrases from the *Classic of Poetry* associated with vines.

7–8 This couplet is developed from the "Lyrics on the Autumn Wind" ("Qiufeng ci" 秋風辭) attributed to Emperor Wu of Han: "When pleasure reaches the extreme, feelings of sorrow are many" 歡樂極兮哀情多.

23

Li Zhijun 96; Lu Qinli 500; Chen Bojun 282; Jin Jicang 74; Huang Jie 27. Holzman 122.

1 Fan Qin reads 路岐/岐路.

5 The most famous example of *yanwan* 燕婉 is in the fifth of the poetic corpus attributed to the Western Han figures Li Ling 李陵 and Su Wu 蘇武, beginning: "When I bound up my hair we became husband and wife" 結髮爲夫妻. This poem concludes with the possibility of separation by death. In Cao Zhi's "Seeing Off Mr. Ying" II 送應氏詩其二, it is extended to friendship: "I wish we could extend our expression of tender feelings, / my friend is going to the northlands" 願得展燕婉，我友之朔方.

9–10 This is a good case of the problems in Chinese commentarial assumptions—in this case, the assumption that we have all the sources for stories that Ruan Ji knew. Huang Jie cites a story in the *Zhanguo ce* (and more briefly in *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋) on how Lord Xiang of Zhao married his younger sister to the Lord of Dai, and then killed the Lord of Dai at a feast and annexed his territory. This accounts for the "girl of Zhao," but loses the specific Zhongshan (Dai was north of Zhongshan, which they take to be an error on Ruan Ji's part). Because the sister was herself deceived and killed herself, Holzman here translates: "Her softness and humility made her cheated all the more." This makes the line work with the adduced allusion, but twists the grammar away from the obvious reading that would follow from the preceding line. Chen Bojun offers an even less likely anecdote from *Xunzi*. The situation is clear in Ruan Ji's lines, but the source story is unknown.

24

Li Zhijun 97; Lu Qinli 500; Chen Bojun 285; Jin Jicang 77; Huang Jie 28. Holzman 217.

The *Gushi ji* (29.6b) has a note that the compiler Feng Weine 馮惟訥 (1512–1572) saw a manuscript of Ruan Ji's poems owned by one Mr. Cao that had been supposedly copied out in the Tang and contained many readings that differed from versions then in circulation (the mid-16th century). He gives the Cao manuscript readings only for this poem. He then notes another edition by one Kong Zonghan 孔宗翰 whose readings are in general agreement with the Cao ms. To make matters

more complicated, Feng's note is given in other collections and versions of Ruan Ji's collection with the additional sentence that there were dozens of poems 數十首 that were not in the standard version of the collection, including this one.

1 The manuscript reads 放 for 於: "I let my heart free." The manuscript is probably correct.

2 The manuscript reads 和 for 陽; this is obviously correct.

5 The manuscript reads 立鵠 for 玄鶴. 立鵠 is otherwise unattested; 玄鶴 is common.

6 The manuscript reads 首 for 志; either could be correct.

8 The manuscript reads 彊 for 曠; here the received reading is better.

9 The manuscript reads 安 for 豈, and 徒 for 遊.

10 The manuscript reads 翩 for 連.

25

Li Zhijun 98; Lu Qinli 501; Chen Bojun 287; Jin Jicang 81; Huang Jie 29. Cited in Li Shan commentary to *Wen xuan* 31 (9–10). Holzman 178.

9 *Liuchao shiji* and Li Shan's citation in a note read 知/見.

10 Or "enlightens my heart."

26

Li Zhijun 98; Lu Qinli 505; *Yiwen leiju* 26; Chen Bojun 338; Jin Jicang 164; Huang Jie 57. Holzman 213.

3–4 The Fan Qin edition and some subsequent editions read: 豈不誠廖郭, 扶搖安可斯[期].

5 The Fan Qin edition and some subsequent editions read: 翔羽雲霄間. I follow Huang Jie in taking *zhaoyao* 招搖 as the *fuyao* 扶搖 described in the *Zhuangzi*.

7 *Yiwen leiju* reads 蒿/艾.

8 *Yiwen leiju* reads 囿/圃.

27

Li Zhijun 99; Lu Qinli 505; Chen Bojun 340; Jin Jicang 167; Huang Jie 58.

Fan Qin combines this and the following poem as one, with a note that the original collection separates them. Since the rhyme is the same in both poems and the theme is the same, combining the poems is not inconceivable.

1 This line is based on a passage from "Xiaobian" 小弁 in the "Lesser Odes" ("Xiaoya" 小雅) of the *Shijing*. The explanation given in the footnote is Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄 (127–200) interpretation of the line.

6 Fan Qin reads 棲/悽. The use of 棲 in line four makes the reading given in the text more plausible.

28

Li Zhijun 100; Lu Qinli 505; Chen Bojun 341; Jin Jicang 169; Huang Jie 59. Holzman 216.

29

Li Zhijun 100; Lu Qinli 505; Chen Bojun 343; Jin Jicang 172; Huang Jie 59. Holzman 61.

30

Li Zhijun 101; Lu Qinli 506; Chen Bojun 343; Jin Jicang 175; Huang Jie 60. Holzman 157.

Lu cites a couplet of Ruan Ji preserved in the "Biography of Li Biao" in the *Wei shu*, suggesting that it belongs to this poem: 宴衎清都中，一去永矣哉. This is essentially a variant version of line six.

2 The Fan Qin edition reads 菜/萊. This is apparently a copyist error.

4 The Fan Qin edition reads 哀/能 (*tai*). Huang Jie argues that 能 is used like 耐.

31

Li Zhijun 101; Lu Qinli 506; Chen Bojun 345; Jin Jicang 177; Huang Jie 61. Holzman 126.

7 Reading *xin* 新 as *qin* 親, following Huang Jie's suggestion.

32

Li Zhijun 102; Lu Qinli 506; Chen Bojun 348; Jin Jicang 181; Huang Jie 63. Holzman 146.

3 *Gushi ji* reads 經/遙.

6 Some versions read 行俟/行□. Chen Bojun accepts this reading and understands it as "keep moving, then stop for a while."

7 The Li Mengyang edition and the early edition of *Gushi ji* have □/逝.

10 The Li Mengyang version has □□□/聊自己.

12 This is a troubled line, and something is wrong here. I have translated it roughly as Jiang Shiyue 蔣師瀹 explains it (cited in Chen Bojun 349).

13 That is, the skill of knowing right and wrong, success and failure.

33

Li Zhijun 103; Lu Qinli 501; Chen Bojun 289; Jin Jicang 85; Huang Jie 30. Holzman 174.

1 Mount Guye is mentioned several times in the *Zhuangzi* as the abode of immortals.

4 Chen Bojun reads 切/覆, and argues that "nears Heaven's Net" is better.

6 *Yan* 晏 may also mean that they "feast" in eupatorium chambers.

11 Huang Jie argues that here *qi* 豈 is *kai* 愷 "happy." There is, however, no attested compound *kaian* 愷安. Holzman argues for keeping the *qi* as an interrogative but is forced to have *an* 安 modify *tong* 通, which is extremely awkward. Everyone assumes that the object here is *lingtai* 靈臺, the numinous terrace, understood in its usage in the *Zhuangzi* as the mind. But this is the "Terrace for Reaching the Divine" *Tongling tai* 通靈臺, raised by Emperor Wu of Han in the Ganquan Palace compound in memory of Lady Gouyi 鈎弋夫人, the mother of his successor, Emperor Zhao. It was on the Terrace for Reaching the Divine that the legendary bluebird, the messenger of the Queen Mother of the West, supposedly perched. *Gushi ji* reads 邇/通.

34

Li Zhijun 103; Lu Qinli 506; Chen Bojun 350; Jin Jicang 185; Huang Jie 64. Holzman 148.

35

Li Zhijun 104; Lu Qinli 501; Chen Bojun 291; Jin Jicang 88; Huang Jie 31. Holzman 153.

4 Fan Qin and some other editions read 華/暉.

6 *Gushi ji* and some other editions read 鳴/號.

36

Li Zhijun 104; Lu Qinli 506; Chen Bojun 351; Jin Jicang 188; Huang Jie 65. Holzman 222.

1 Fan Qin reads 憂/快. An early note in Fan Qin suggests this line should read: 夸談噴憂懣.

2 Chen Bojun reads 情/惰.

7 Fan Qin reads 傲/度.

37

Li Zhijun 105; Lu Qinli 506; Chen Bojun 353; Jin Jicang 191; Huang Jie 66. Holzman 53.

Han Wei shiji 漢魏詩集 and the Li Mengyang edition have a note giving an alternate version of line five and the following lines: 獨坐 [Li reads 處/坐]山嵒中，惻愴懷所思。王子亦何好，猗靡相攜持。悅懌猶今辰，計校在一時。置此遊朝事，日夕將見欺。The Fan Qin version of ll. 5–6 in Li Zhijun is rather different: 簪冕安能處，山巖在一世。This version omits ll. 7–10 in the *Han Wei shiji* version given above.

7 Commentators take this line very differently: Jin Jicang has "what did he love"; Zhong Jingduo has "what good is there in seeking the Prince"; Holzman has "how fine was the Prince." There is a clear precedent in the Han work *Han Shi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 8: "Marquis Wen asked, 'What does the lord of Zhongshan love?' 'He loves the *Poems*.' The Marquis asked, 'Which ones does he love among the Poems?' 'He loves 'Shuli' and 'Chenfeng.' '" 文侯曰：中山之君亦何好乎？對曰：好詩。文侯曰：於詩何好？曰：好黍離與晨風. This and other earlier usages of 何好 suggest that Jin Jicang was correct. The sense of "what good is there?" requires a *you* 有 before 何好.

38

Li Zhijun 105; Lu Qinli 501; Chen Bojun 293; Jin Jicang 91; Huang Jie 32. Holzman 59.

2 Or, "cause the wound within," that is, the wound given by slander.

4 "Three Rivers" usually refers to the section of the Yangzi after Pengli Lake, where the river divides into three courses before rejoining. The use here is far from certain unless we take it as a variation on *sanhe*

三河, which refers to the capital region in 7(V) and would be the appropriate location to worry about slander.

9 *Gushi ji* reads 有/自.

10 Or: how can one continue on that way?

39

Li Zhijun 106; Lu Qinli 506; Chen Bojun 356; Jin Jicang 196; Huang Jie 68. Holzman 125.

5 This line presents some problems. Although most texts read 思/恩, I follow Chen Bojun in preferring 恩, the *Gushi ji* reading. Most commentators take *huishi* 惠施 as I have; Li Zhijun argues strenuously that this is Hui Shi, the name of a Warring States philosopher who frequently appears as an interlocutor with Zhuang Zhou in *Zhuangzi*. This is a tempting argument, but *huishi* is also commonly used as "bestowing grace" and is used by Ruan Ji in that sense in 31 (LI) (慈惠未易施). Commentators seem to all take *sun* 損 in its usual sense of "diminish" or "harm." I think this is rather the localized usage of the term in the "Xici zhuan" 繫辭傳 of the *Yijing*: 損以遠害 "to demur in order to keep far from harm." This is the sense of "reduce" applied to the desire for what is excessive. One might translate as "restrain oneself." This usage of *sun* gives coherence to the whole poem, under the rubric "keeping far from harm."

7 The "wagtails" were a figure for the amity among brothers in the *Shijing*. Huang Jie cites a usage by the Western Han figure Dongfang Shuo 東方朔, where they are a figure for tirelessness in study. Holzman takes them as the innocent victims of slander.

10 There is considerable disagreement as to how to takes these lines. It could be that the wagtails will be victims of the crooked man, or that those birds fly freely in amity and do not realize that the crooked man will himself not be able to last.

40

Li Zhijun 107; Lu Qinli 507; Chen Bojun 358; Jin Jicang 199; Huang Jie 69. Cited in *Chuxue ji* 5 (1–2). Holzman 156.

2 Fan Qin reads 集一隅/蔭堂除. The Li Mengyang edition and *Gushi ji* read 隅/除.

4 The *Li ji* 禮記 notes that when someone is seventy and called to service, he should be given an armrest and staff.

11 Reading *limi* 離靡/離麾, following Huang Jie's suggestion.

41

Li Zhijun 107; Lu Qinli 501; Chen Bojun 295; Jin Jicang 95; Huang Jie 33. Cited in *Taiping huanyu ji* 56 (1–2). Holzman 206.

5 Chen Bojun reads 時/特. *Te* 特 is a variant in many of the early texts and was used in this period for birds roosting "alone."

42

Li Zhijun 108; Lu Qinli 507; Chen Bojun 360; Jin Jicang 203; Huang Jie 70. Holzman 221.

1–2 This also paraphrases a passage in the *Shejiang* 涉江 of the "Jiuzhang" 九章 in the *Chuci*.

43

Li Zhijun 108; Lu Qinli 501; Chen Bojun 297; Jin Jicang 99; Huang Jie 35. Cited in *Yiwen leiju* 18 (1–10); *Chuxue ji* 19 (3–10); *Taiping yulan* 381(3–6). Holzman 146.

2 *Yiwen leiju* cites as 衛衢/街術.

3 *Chuxue ji* reads 妍俊/妖冶. Fan Qin, *Han Wei shiji*, and the Li Mengyang edition read 世/子. Huang Kan reads this as handsome young men yearning for a glance from a beautiful woman (cited in Chen Bojun 299). This makes sense, but *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 glosses *yaoye* 妖冶 as "the manner of a woman." This expands a phrase (妖冶閑都) from Sima Xiangru's "Shanglin fu" 上林賦, and was conventionally used for women.

4 *Han Wei shiji*, the Li Mengyang edition, and *Gushi ji* read 煥/英.

5 *Yiwen leiju* reads 鬟/髮. Fan Qin and *Han Wei shiji* read 照/發.

8 *Yiwen leiju* reads 過/誇.

44

Li Zhijun 110; Lu Qinli 507; *Yiwen leiju* 26; Chen Bojun 361; Jin Jicang 206; Huang Jie 71. Holzman 115.

6 Some editions read 龍/輕.

8 Li Mengyang and *Gushi ji* read 術/街.

9 *Yiwen leiju* reads 宴/晏. Jin Jicang reads 宴; Guo Guang keeps 晏, but interprets it as 宴. Holzman translates as "revelry," obviously reading 宴. This is, however, basically the same phrase as 35 (XXIV),

ll.3–4 (逍遙未終晏，朱暉忽西傾). There Holzman translates as "ended."

12 Fan Qin and *Gushi ji* read 僊/憑.

45

Li Zhijun 110; Lu Qinli 507; Chen Bojun 363; Jin Jicang 209; Huang Jie 72. Holzman 111.

46

Li Zhijun 111; Lu Qinli 500; *Wen xuan* 23; Chen Bojun 274; Jin Jicang 65; Huang Jie 23. Holzman 134.

2 Fan Qin reads 親/歡.

3 Wuchen reads 山/出.

47

Li Zhijun 112; Lu Qinli 507; Chen Bojun 365; Jin Jicang 213; Huang Jie 74. Holzman 49

1 Some editions read 劍/刺.

48

Li Zhijun 112; Lu Qinli 504; Chen Bojun 319; Jin Jicang 136; Huang Jie 47. Holzman 219.

The poem throughout echoes the *Zhuangzi* chapter "On Swords" 說劍 in which Zhuang Zhou persuades a prince to give up his love of swordplay.

3–4 These lines are taken verbatim from "The Poetic Exposition on Hyperbole" ("Dayan fu" 大言賦) attributed to Song Yu 宋玉. It is possible that the poetic exposition postdates Ruan Ji's poem.

49

Li Zhijun 113; Lu Qinli 507; Chen Bojun 367; Jin Jicang 215; Huang Jie 75. Holzman 60.

50

Li Zhijun 113; Lu Qinli 507; Chen Bojun 368; Jin Jicang 217; Huang Jie 76. Cited in *Sanguo zhi* 62 (5–6). Holzman 65.

3 *Gushi ji* and some other versions read 歡/觀. Fan Qin and some other editions read 彼/陂.

51

Li Zhijun 113; Lu Qinli 508; Chen Bojun 369; Jin Jicang 219; Huang Jie 77. Cited in *Shuijing zhu* (1–2, 5–6). Holzman 27.

1–2 Note the similarity to the opening of 11 (IX).

4 Li Zhijun argues for the Li Mengyang edition reading 驪黃/鸝黃. This refers to a horse being "black and yellow" in the *Shijing* ("Stallions" 駉 in the "Lu Hymns" 魯頌).

5 The Nine Bends was a canal on the Gu River near where the Gu River entered the Luo River.

8 Who the "Enchantress" is remains debated among the various commentaries. There is, however, no way to identify the woman with any certainty. Huang Jie identifies her with Da Ji 妲己, the favorite of Zhoù, the last ruler of the Shang, thus linking it to the possible association of Mount Shouyang with Bo Yi and Shu Qi.

52

Li Zhijun 114; Lu Qinli 508; Chen Bojun 371; Jin Jicang 222; Huang Jie 78. Holzman 51.

The Crown Prince of King Ling of Zhou, named Jin 晉, has a chapter (64) about him in an early work *Yi Zhou shu* 逸周書. He was known for his cleverness. When his early death was predicted, he said that in three years he would be the honored guest of the emperor in Heaven, and at last his mortal body passed away on schedule. Early on his story was conflated with that of Wangzi Qiao, "Qiao the Prince" (some argue that this should be "Wang Ziqiao") and a different set of stories about Wangzi Qiao's transformation into an immortal, including meeting Master Hill Adrift (Fuqiugong). Whatever the actual historical situation was, by the third century the Crown Prince Jin and Wangzi Qiao were considered the same person.

53

Li Zhijun 114; Lu Qinli 504; Chen Bojun 321; Jin Jicang 139; Huang Jie 48. Holzman 218.

10 Chen Bohai reads 彊/戰.

54

Li Zhijun 115; Lu Qinli 508; Chen Bojun 373; Jin Jicang 225; Huang Jie 79. Holzman 64.

1 Early editions read as translated. A variant 寒/塞 was noted and the reading was adopted by Huang Jie and followed in most modern editions. Li Zhijun argues that this is a reference to Laozi going out the pass westward as Confucius wanted to sail eastward on the sea. This seems the best way to understand the couplet.

3 *Zhuming* 朱明 more commonly refers to summer. Its usage as "daylight" ("light of the red sun") is from "Summoning the Soul" in the *Chuci*. Many commentators take *bu xiang jian* 不相見 as not seeing the daylight, which fits the figure of darkening in the following line. This is possible, but strange for *bu xiang jian*.

4 Jin Jicang is clearly correct here in his interpretation; the phrase *wuhou* 無侯 has precedents only as "having no target cloth" for use in archery. What this might mean in the context of the poem is uncertain, but I have left the translation literal. It may simply be an original way to keep the rhyme and say that he "has no goal."

9 I have left this without a note because the commentators cannot give a satisfactory explanation. Most commentators use the story of Ling Zhe 靈輒 from the *Zuo zhuan* (Duke Xuan 2) because Duke Xuan found Ling Zhe lying in the shade of a mulberry tree, gave him food, and was later repaid when Ling Zhe prevented an assassination attempt on the duke. But there is nothing to provoke lament in the story unless, as Huang Jie suggests, the poet is weeping for the failure of finding anyone to repay the grace they received from Wei. Chen Bojun rejects the *Zuo zhuan* story, but impossibly takes the story of Confucius complaining of his misfortunes to the wise Master Sanghu, who tells him the story of one Lin Hui (*sanglin* 桑林 being the "mulberry grove" in Ruan's poem). Alternatively, Sanglin, properly the grove or forest on Mount Sang, was where Tang, the founder of the Shang Dynasty, performed the *dao* 禱 prayer for blessings, after which "Sanglin" became the ritual music of Shang. I can find no particularly lamentable story associated with it.

12 Fan Qin reads 安/鞍.

55

Li Zhijun 116; Lu Qinli 508; Chen Bojun 377; Jin Jicang 228; Huang Jie 80. Holzman 110.

10 The Li Mengyang edition reads 腹內蔑/戶內滅.

11 Fan Qin and some other editions read 裏/衷.

13 *Weiqu* 委曲 can also be taken as "devious."

56

Li Zhijun 117; Lu Qinli 502; Chen Bojun 299; Jin Jicang 103; Huang Jie 36. Cited in Li Shan commentary to *Wen xuan* 27 (11–12). Holzman 183.

1 Several early editions read 花/木.

4 Fan Qin reads 投/讐. *Gushi ji* cites variant 侔/讐. 相讐 (相讎) is an established compound, usually implying hostility. Here it must mean that they cannot "be a pair" together.

12 Huang Jie suggests that this is a sword, but famous swords can also have a dragon-nature.

16 This line is adapted from the *Zhuangzi*.

57

Li Zhijun 117; Lu Qinli 508; Chen Bojun 379; Jin Jicang 232; Huang Jie 82. Holzman 172.

2 Gu Zhi 古直 takes this as a place name, as the phrasing suggests, but Huang Jie takes its sense to be: "my roamings were scarcely to be endured."

3 There were various places with this name, including one in Heaven. Huang takes this as the bridge Qin Shihuang built across the Wei River, and hence to the ruins of the Qin capital, standing in turn for the prospective ruins of the Wei dynasty.

4 Li Mengyang reads 駘/怡.

5 Huang Jie thinks *qimi* 綺靡 is a mistake for *yimi* 猗靡.

12 Li Mengyang reads 超世□/起坐復; *Gushi ji* reads 超世又.

58

Li Zhijun 118; Lu Qinli 502; Chen Bojun 301; Jin Jicang 107; Huang Jie 37. Holzman 11.

8 Chen Bojun reads 自照妍/應自然. Li Mengyang has a lacuna for 應.

9–10 Fan Qin reads 奸/應. Huang Jie thinks that the *yaonü* 妖女 of the text is a mistake for *Nü Ba* 女魃 (妭), referred to in *Shanhai jing*. This is probably correct. In his battle with Chiyou 蚩尤, the Yellow Emperor sent his Winged Dragon to attack. To counter this Chiyou sent the gods of wind and rain to raise a great storm. The Yellow

Emperor, in response, sent down Ba, the goddess of drought. The rain stopped and Chiyou was slain, but Ba could not get back to heaven. In Zhang Heng's "Response to Criticism" ("Yingjian" 應間), there is a line: 夫女魃北而應龍翔. This work is contained in Zhang Heng's biography in *The Latter Han History* (*Hou Han shu* 後漢書). The Tang commentator Li Xian 李賢 (654–684) cites the *Shanhai jing* source using *yao* for Ba. This suggests a manuscript tradition of the *Shanhai jing* that had this reading. Obviously in our current version of "Singing My Cares," the order of the characters is reversed to give an apparently natural compound.

11 Fan Qin reads 變/侈.

59

Li Zhijun 119; Lu Qinli 502; Chen Bojun 306; Jin Jicang 111; Huang Jie 39. Holzman 128.

9 Fan Qin reads 流/疏.

60

Li Zhijun 119; Lu Qinli 502; Chen Bojun 308; Jin Jicang 115; Huang Jie 40. Cited in *Yiwen leiju* 26 (1–8). Holzman 9.

This is one of the "Singing My Cares" poems that invite interpretation as referring to contemporary politics. Although commonly understood as lamenting the decline of Ruan Ji's own Wei dynasty, the poem can just as easily be read as predicting the dynasty's ultimate ruin for its own failings—such a prediction could hardly have displeased Sima Zhao, who clearly had this eventuality in mind. We cannot decide if this is lamenting the Wei or laying the moral ground to justify the final coup of the Sima family. If one poses the legal argument *a cui bono*, the answer is all too clear.

4 It is worth noting that Ruan Ji chooses to use the name Liang for the kingdom of Wei here.

61

Li Zhijun 120; Lu Qinli 508; Chen Bojun 381; Jin Jicang 236; Huang Jie 83. Holzman 113.

3 Li Zhijun argues for the Li Mengyang reading 陰/險 to match the *Shi ji* source of the line. Chen Bojun reads 險 with Fan Qin.

4 There is a good parallel for *weike gan* in "Wu shu" 吳書 13 of *Sanguo*

zhi: "Bei is a devious enemy . . . he should not be messed with just yet" 備是猾虜 . . . 未可干也.

6 The Li Mengyang edition reads 甘/足. Chen Bojun reads 並/足 with *Gushi ji*; Li Zhijun argues that this is a mistake for the reading 甘. The same variation between 甘 and 並 can be found in 45 (LX).

8 Huang Jie argues that *duoduo* 咄咄 should be *chuchu* 出出, also an exclamation, but perhaps implying laughter.

62

Li Zhijun 121; Lu Qinli 503; Chen Bojun 310; Jin Jicang 118; Huang Jie 41. Holzman 159.

4 The Li Mengyang edition and *Gushi ji* read 似/以. This is followed by Huang Jie and Chen Bojun.

5 Fan Qin reads 塵路/塵露.

6 Li Mengyang reads 邈/竟.

63

Li Zhijun 122; Lu Qinli 503; Chen Bojun 312; Jin Jicang 121; Huang Jie 43. Holzman 131.

64

Li Zhijun 122; Lu Qinli 503; Chen Bojun 313; Jin Jicang 124; Huang Jie 43. Cited in *Yiwen leiju* 26 (1–8); Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130–1200) edition of Han Yu's 韓愈 (768–824) collection (1–4). Holzman 131.

1 *Yiwen leiju* reads 日/朝.

2 *Yiwen leiju* reads 夕/昏.

4 *Yiwen leiju* reads 魂/神.

6 *Yiwen leiju* reads 情/時.

65

Li Zhijun 123; Lu Qinli 508; Chen Bojun 383; Jin Jicang 239; Huang Jie 84. Holzman 168.

2 For this line the Li Mengyang edition reads 有情未無悲; the Fan Qin edition and *Gushi ji* read as translated. Li Zhijun follows a note in *Gushi ji* that Ruan's collection reads 無情亦無悲.

9–10 The translation given is the most natural construction of the lines. However, because this reading reverses the momentum of the first eight lines, commentators have exercised considerable ingenu-

ity in making it conform to the direction of the rest of the poem. Chen Bojun wants to reverse the order of 始 and 焉, a rather radical suggestion which does succeed in making the lines say what readers want. Holzman translates the ninth line as "At last I am able to forget my difficulties"; this is possible, though a less natural reading. Huang Jie, as he sometimes does, solves problems by taking recourse to an archaic usage of 焉 as "thereupon." Reversal in the final couplet is not uncommon in the series. The interpretation given in translation in effect says: "I know what one should do, but I cannot achieve it."

66

Li Zhijun 123; Lu Qinli 509; Chen Bojun 384; Jin Jicang 243; Huang Jie 85. Cited in *Yiwen leiju* 26 (1–8). Holzman 148.

7–8 *Yiwen leiju* reads 蜉蝣願三朝，采采循羽翼.

10 Huang Jie suggests that the phrase 收拭 is a mistake for 修飾. This is possible, the first syllables being very close in Middle Chinese, and the second syllables being homophones in Middle Chinese.

67

Li Zhijun 124; Lu Qinli 509; Chen Bojun 386; Jin Jicang 246; Huang Jie 86. Holzman 119.

9 Echoing *Zhuangzi*, that with the destruction of jade and pearls, robbers will not appear.

68

Li Zhijun 124; Lu Qinli 509; Chen Bojun 388; Jin Jicang 249; Huang Jie 87. Cited in *Beitang shuchao* 57 (3–4). Holzman 185.

4 This line is reworked from the "Jiuhuai" 九懷 in the *Chuci*.

5 Fan Qin reads 再騁撫四外. The text as translated reworks a phrase from the "Zaiyou" 在宥 chapter of *Zhuangzi*.

69

Li Zhijun 125; Lu Qinli 504; Chen Bojun 324; Jin Jicang 144; Huang Jie 49. Holzman 165.

1 Fan Qin reads 渾/混. The two words are synonymous, distinguished in Middle Chinese only by the tone, and compounded as 混渾. The compound 渾元 is unattested before Ruan Ji.

70

Li Zhijun 126; Lu Qinli 504; Chen Bojun 326; Jin Jicang 148; Huang Jie 51. Holzman 180.

3 *Gushi ji* reads 波/彼.

4 Fan Qin reads 鳧鷖/浮鳧, dropping the rhyme. 浮鳧 is probably an editorial correction.

7 The translation of *ting* 停 as given roughly follows Huang Jie; Tian Xiaofei offers a more attractive interpretation of *ting* as *tingyu* 停育, "to nurture."

14 The significance of this line is unclear. Perhaps it refers to the fact that the accounts of immortals often tell of them appearing to mortals.

15 The Huang Jie commentary takes the agents of "pressing" to be both the fact that one is tossed along in the world and the unreliability of accounts of the immortals.

71

Li Zhijun 127; Lu Qinli 504; Chen Bojun 329; Jin Jicang 151; Huang Jie 52. Holzman 67.

72

Li Zhijun 127; Lu Qinli 503; Chen Bojun 315; Jin Jicang 127; Huang Jie 44. Holzman 160.

9 This reworks a line from "Far Roaming" ("Yuan you" 遠遊) in the *Chuci*.

73

Li Zhijun 128; Lu Qinli 509; Chen Bojun 389; Jin Jicang 252; Huang Jie 88. Holzman 66.

1 The earliest texts read 世上/上世. *Shangshi* 上世 is the *Gushi ji* reading. *Shangshi* is clearly an emendation, but it is preferable in the context.

2 *Tiandan* 恬淡, "tranquil and plain," was the quality advocated in *Laozi*.

74

Li Zhijun 129; Lu Qinli 509; Chen Bojun 392; Jin Jicang 257; Huang Jie 90. Cited in Li Shan commentary to *Wen xuan* 28 (9–10). Holzman 30.

1 Huang Jie, Jin Jicang, and Guo Guang take *liangdong* 梁東 as translated. Chen Bojun takes it literally as "east of the bridge."

9 This is the only usage of the compound *luduan* 路端 and is cited this way in Li Shan commentary.

75

Li Zhijun 129; Lu Qinli 509; Chen Bojun 394; Jin Jicang 262; Huang Jie 91. Holzman 167.

1 *Gushi ji* reads 秋/稅. Most editions prefer 秋駕, here best understood as a technique for good carriage driving rather than the imperial equipage. Chen Bojun also cites the interpretation of *qiu* 秋 as "flying," hence a heavenly journey. The two readings of the line are both possible. Li Zhijun argues for *shui* 稅, and this seems to better accord with both the story of Dongye Bi and with Ruan Ji's frequent mockery of mad rushing.

3 Fan Qin reads 輪/綸.

6 Huang Jie proposed that the unprecedented *yanyang* 演漾 is a mistake for *huangyang* 潢漾, with many precedents. This is persuasive.

7 Huang Jie cites *Laozi* 29, where *xu* 歔/嘘 and *chui* 吹 are paired as things that creatures do, "expelling breath" gently or vigorously. He also cites the more obvious source in the "Da zongshi" 大宗師 chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, given in the note. The more common uses of *chuixu* are all later.

11 *Zi nian* 茲年 is a set usage meaning to "extend years," 茲 being understood as 滋.

76

Li Zhijun 130; Lu Qinli 510; Chen Bojun 396; Jin Jicang 266; Huang Jie 93. Holzman 170.

2 The use of *minfu* (or, perhaps here, *minmian*) 僶俛 is a vexed question. *Minfu* usually means "in a moment." In 12 (X) it is contextually explained as "going along [with the crowd]," from the Tang gloss (Zhang Xian 張銑 of the "Five Officers," *wuchen*) as *fuyang* 俯仰. I have translated in that way in 12 (X), with some misgivings. We have these graphs used in the same period as *minmian* (i.e. 僶勉), meaning "to work hard at." This makes good sense here and does not require tenuously extended meanings.

3 *Linchuan* 臨川 is used elsewhere (as 臨長川) in the series (62,

XXXII) to refer to Confucius's comment standing by the river: "It goes off like this, day and night without ceasing." This, unfortunately, does not fit the context here. Although the words are different, this seems most reminiscent of the opening of the "Autumn Floods" ("Qiushui" 秋水) chapter in the *Zhuangzi*.

8 It is not at all clear how this answers the question in the preceding line. Huang Jie cites a passage from the *Huainanzi*: "The eyes can see wisp of a filament in autumn, but the ears cannot hear the sound of thunder. The ears can get the harmony of sounds of jade and stone [chimes], but the eyes cannot see the height of Mount Tai." *Xiangxiu* 相羞 is used nowhere else in this period and earlier.

10 *Shengse*, "sounds and visual sense," are strongly associated with the pleasures of the senses, and particularly with the attraction to women.

12 Zeng Guofan suspected this line had some wrong characters, and it probably does. Huang Jie explains the unique compound 羨遊 as 遊衍, which is a *Shijing* usage that Ruan Ji uses elsewhere in "Singing My Cares," with the order inverted to sustain the rhyme. *Xian* 羨 and *yan* 衍 have a different initial in Middle Chinese, but Lu Deming 陸德明 (556–627) gives a *fanqie* spelling for 羨 that would make it a near homophone with 衍 (See Chen Bojun 397).

77

Li Zhijun 130; Lu Qinli 510; Chen Bojun 398; Jin Jicang 269; Huang Jie 94. Holzman 176.

10 Fan Qin reads 忽將如何誇. Li Zhijun says this doesn't make sense.

78

Li Zhijun 131; Lu Qinli 510; Chen Bojun 400; Jin Jicang 272; Huang Jie 95. Holzman 216.

79

Li Zhijun 131; Lu 510; Chen Bojun 401; Jin Jicang 277; Huang Jie 96. Holzman 177.

5 Fan Qin reads 日/亡.

80

Li Zhijun 132; Lu Qinli 510; Chen Bojun 403; Jin Jicang 280; Huang Jie 97. Holzman 181.

8 Or: "One evening you will see no more dawn."

81

Li Zhijun 132; Lu Qinli 504; *Yiwen leiju* 26; Chen Bojun not included; Jin Jicang not included; Huang Jie not included. Cited in *Yiwen leiju* 90 (1–8); Li Shan commentary to *Wen xuan* 14 (1–4). Holzman 212.

2 Fan Qin reads 浩渺運荒裔. Li Mengyang reads 相隨飛荒裔. The text given is the *Yiwen leiju* reading.
3 Fan Qin and Li Mengyang read 揮/雙.
6 Fan Qin and Li Mengyang read 栖/宿.
7 Fan Qin and Li Mengyang read 抗/託.
8 Fan Qin and Li Mengyang read 孰/不.

82

Li Zhijun 133; Lu Qinli 510; Chen Bojun 404; Jin Jicang 283; Huang Jie 98. Cited in *Chuxue ji* 27 (5–6). Holzman 210.

1 Fan Qin reads 在/前.
5 Fan Qin reads 栖/西.
7 Fan Qin reads 層/增.
10 Following Huang Jie's emendation of *nan* 難 to *tan* 歎.

The Four-syllable-line Poems

I

Lu Qinli 493; Chen Bojun 200. Cited in *Yiwen leiju* 26 (1–4, 13–20).

4 Chen Bojun reads 風/氣. *Qi* 氣 is the *Yiwen leiju* reading.
18 *Yiwen leiju* reads 介/托.

II

Lu Qinli 494; Chen Bojun 202. Cited in *Yiwen leiju* 26 (1–2).

2 *Yiwen leiju* reads 地/氣.

III

Lu Qinli 494; Chen Bojun 203. Cited in *Yiwen leiju* 30 (3–8).

4 Following the interpretation in the *Shijing*.
15 Chen Bojun and other commentators recognize that this line is garbled. Attempts to explain it are very forced.

The Poetic Expositions (*fu*)

Poetic Exposition on Dongping

Li Zhijun 3; Chen Bojun 1; Guo Guang 1. Holzman 39.

21 Fan Qin var. 觀/安.

22 斯 is the variant cited in Fan Qin for 期. Chen Bojun reads 斯, and this seems obviously correct.

25 Fan Qin reads 忽/沕.

52 Fan Qin var. 風/荒.

53 *Zongheng* 縱橫 is sometimes understood as referring to "vertical and horizontal alliances" during the Warring States.

55 Chen Bojun follows Xue Yingqi in reading 厲/屬. This is clearly an emendation to avoid the repetition of 屬 in the following line, and indeed is probably a scribal error. Xue's reading is probably a conjectural emendation, but the compound *lingli* 淩厲, "fiercely aggressive," is attested in this period. The more serious problem is the negative usage of *haojun* 豪俊, commonly used as "outstanding" in a positive sense.

59 This is the Fan Qin reading. Other editions read 渺欲/鄉飲.

61 The position of the lacuna is uncertain and various emendations have been offered in the Ming editions. Chen Bojun proposes 厥土/土□ on the model of a passage in the "Yu gong" of the *Classic of Documents*. I have based the translation on the sense of *zhong* 中 in that passage.

62 This could refer to "Lius and Wangs."

65 This is uncertain. Shu is a surname, but is also used as the second character in a number of double surnames. It would make the most sense if the whole line referred to the extended family of the Liu princes.

67 This is Fan Qin's reading; other editions read 土/險.

84 As so often in Ruan Ji's unique usages, commentators differ on how to handle *li jian* 力間. Guo Guang's explanation best links it to what precedes it.

89 The lacuna is in the Fan Qin edition. Most editions emend to 過焉, "pass by here."

93 Taking *yi* 夷 in the sense of 彝, following Guo Guang. This loan character is a *Shujing* usage.

97 Fan Qin reads 向/尚.

98 Fan Qin reads 囚/因. Chen Bojun reads 罔/因, following the Ji Pu 及樸 edition, which was done in the 1620s and generally follows the Xue Xingqi edition.

122 黨 here is read *tang*, a usage orthographically marked later as 儻.

123 Fan Qin reads 微/攸, var. 攸.

126 The sense of *wuzhi* 無知 here depends on its usage in the *Shijing*, "Xi you changchu" 隰有萇楚. It could also be the simpler sense of "unknowing."

132 This might be Ruan Ji himself composing a "new poem," but it seems best to understand it in terms of the ideology behind the *Classic of Poetry*, in which the Poems arise from locales, with the people expressing their response to the social situation of the times.

134 Commentators cite the "cinnabar tree" mentioned in the *Shanhai jing*, but that seems out of place here. Chen Bojun makes some far-fetched links to interpret it as an evergreen, in which case it always flourishes, so would not need to flourish "a second time."

137 Ruan Ji elsewhere used the *Lüshi chunqiu* variant of this story, which had dragonflies rather than gulls.

145 Fan Qin var. 循/脩. Chen Bojun reads 循.

152 Guo Guang cites the allusion that every later reader would think of, the story of Wen Qiao 溫嶠 (288–329) lighting a rhino horn and revealing strange beasts in the water. The phrasing fits this story, but Wen Qiao was not born until after Ruan Ji's death.

165 Fan Qin reads 記/託. Xue reads 颸/思; this is clearly the sense intended.

173 Taking *hexu* 合墟 as 合虛, in the *Shanhai jing* the mountain from which the sun and moon come forth. The graph 墟 has the sense of a mountain or hill.

174 Xianchi 咸池 is usually where the sun bathes in the west, near the Kunlun Mountains.

177 Chen Bojun follows Xue Yingqi's reading here, which, as usually the case, make a much easier line.

181ff. I have followed Holzman's understanding that this rhyme segment describes the perfected being, but I have shifted back to the primary speaker speaking about himself in l. 187 because it is difficult to reconcile the received text with a "perfected being." It is hard to see how Holzman gets his translation "goes to the bottom of" for the common reading of the verb as *ci* 賜, and I think Chen Bojun

is right that the correct reading is *chang* 悵 in l. 188. Moreover, there is no way to reconcile the apparent allusion in l. 190 with a perfected being. At the same time these lines could be from the speaker about himself. I take seriously the figure of distance invoked in ll. 181–82: from close-up the pattern of embroidery is an unintelligible intricacy, but in standing back one can see the pattern.

187 I have followed the variant in the Fan Qin edition, reading 書/舒. Chen Bojun takes the reading in the seventeenth-century Ji Pu edition 訓, which yields a common compound 訓誥. I have taken *shu* 書 in its literal sense, but it could be "in the *Classic of Documents*."

188 I have followed the variant in the Fan Qin edition, reading 悵/賜.

190 The relevance of this story here is unclear. Chen Bojun avoids the problem of the relevance of the *Zuo zhuan* story by interpreting 環 as 鬟, the hair-coils of a woman. This introduces a new character and is even less clear in the context.

194 I have no secure sense of the use of *she* 攝 in this line. There are (as variants) the plants that Bo Yi and Shu Qi ate, and there may be an association here.

196 Chen Bojun wants to read the characters in Zhuanxu's name as they are glossed individually.

197–98 There is no appropriate story linking Zhuanxu to zithers. The suggestion that this was Shun's zither, given in the footnotes, follows Guo Guang. I offer it for want of a better association. It should, however, be noted that this would be an abrupt change of topic and that the *fu* uses the general term *qinse* 琴瑟, "zithers and great zithers," rather than the specific *qin* 琴 in the Shun anecdote. We should entertain the possibility that Ruan Ji knew a legend that has not survived in the written record.

213 Chen Bojun reads 特/時.

214 Interpreting the *shi* 試 here is uncertain; Chen Bojun follows Xue in reading 誠/試, which seems a good emendation and a likely scribal error. I translate as *cheng* 誠. *Wan* 莞 here is probably a loan for 苑, used as "withered up" in *Huainanzi*.

217 Fan Qin reads 收/牧.

220 The compound *youshu* 遊署 is a unique occurrence. Holzman has "roam in an official bureau," though that is a peculiar verb for the object and departs from the register. The frequent omission of

radicals may be the case here, suggesting the homophone 曙, "dawn-light," but that would also drop the rhyme.

Poetic Exposition on Mount Shouyang

Li Zhijun 8; Chen Bojun 24; Guo Guang 19. Holzman 22.

From its reappearance in the Ming, this poetic exposition has been taken to represent Ruan Ji's distress over the impending fall of the Wei and the ascendancy of the Sima family. To interpret the text this way requires immense faith that this was always Ruan Ji's overriding concern. First of all, the historical situations are not parallel. The Sima family remained vocal about their loyalty to the Wei, even as Sima Shi deposed Cao Fang and made him Prince of Qi, installing another Cao, Cao Mao, on the throne. The use of Cao Mao's reign name places the date of composition late in 254 or at the beginning of 255. This hardly parallels the overthrow of the Shang by the Zhou.

But given the date of composition, perhaps a vague analogy might have been made. The analogy places the Sima family in the position of the founders of the Zhou dynasty, among the most revered rulers in Chinese history, with Sima Yi presumably as King Wen of Zhou and Sima Shi as King Wu. If there was sympathy for Bo Yi and Shu Qi, Ruan Ji takes pains to refute it point by point, even criticizing Confucius's praise of them (l. 38). He charges them with seeking fame by their actions (l. 40). In ll. 43–44 he seems to criticize their objection to going on campaign against Shang before King Wu had gone through the full funeral rites for his father; King Wu was following Heaven's Mandate for the good of all, rather than following the ritual requirements that Ruan so detested. Bo Yi and Shu Qi ended their lives for their own aggrandizement; the poetic exposition ends by telling them that they would have better shown their principles if they had not spoken publically against King Wu.

If we accept an analogy to Sima Shi's deposition of an utterly useless and potentially dangerous Wei ruler coming into his maturity, an unbiased reader (and probably to any reader of Ruan Ji's day) would see this as a defense of Sima Shi's actions and a rebuttal to those who might have protested them. Ruan Ji was, after all, a writer in Sima Zhao's entourage. If a poem might be a private act, a poetic exposition was far more public.

3 Fan Qin reads 風+壬/飄. No such character exists.

4 Most editions read 纖/瀸.

9 Reading 沙 as 莎=蓑.
11 This is slightly modified from a line in "Far Roaming" in the *Chuci*.
18 Chen Bojun reads 亂/射 (*yì*).
19 Chen Bojun follows the Xue edition reading 寶/實.

Poetic Exposition on the Cuckoos

Li Zhijun 9; Chen Bojun 47; Guo Guang 33. Holzman 19.

Preface This was preserved in *Yiwen leiju* 91. Chen Bojun argues that this is a *shijiu* 鳲鳩, a cuckoo, which is confirmed by the *Shijing* allusion in line 12.

Last lines, in brackets These appear first in Xue Yingqi's version in *Liuchao shiji*, which has many variants that make a great deal of sense. This, among many others, suggests that this edition is replete with editorial "repairs." The poetic exposition ends with an abruptness and casual heartlessness. These added lines make a satisfying conclusion to late imperial taste. Holzman takes this in reference to Sima Yi's return to power and the slaughter of the Cao Shuang faction in 249, but there is no indication when in the Jiaping reign this was written. Guo Guang, with characteristic certainty, dates it to 251 and associates it with another incident in the Sima rise to power. Either is possible, but neither is supported by adequate evidence.

3 The only parallel usage of *qiyuan* 期緣 is in the negative, describing a visit to court "without fixing a time and having a reason." The positive usage here suggests the mating season, both an established time and compelled by instinct.

5 *Tai yu* 胎隅, "an egg-laying nook," is an original phrase and the interpretation is tentative.

6 *Zeng* 增 is a common loan for 橧 in this usage.

28 Fan Qin reads 坑/抗; Xue reads 玩/抗.

Poetic Exposition on the Macaque

Li Zhijun 11; Chen Bojun 40; Guo Guang 30; *Yiwen leiju* 95 (25–34, 37–40, 43–46); *Beitang shuchao* 158 (15–18); *Chuxue ji* 29 (27–30). Holzman 56.

4 I have tried to translate the text as given with *shi* 釋, but in the general scrambling of radicals in manuscripts from this period, the proper and easiest verb here would be *ze* 澤, "to moisten," "nurture and make glossy."

17 Reading 或 as 惑.
20 Reading 禽 as 擒.
28 *Yiwen leiju* reads 貌/形.
29 *Yiwen leiju* does not have 內.
31 *Yiwen leiju* reads 偏凌/褊淺.
33 *Yiwen leiju* reads 眒/呻.
35–36 Missing in *Yiwen leiju*.
39 This is the *Yiwen leiju* reading; other editions read 盼/眄.
41–42 Missing in *Yiwen leiju*. Chen Bojun suggests that 增 should be 憎, for which it is a loan word.
45 *Yiwen leiju* reads 嗤/蚩. *Yiwen leiju* reads 紲; other editions read 泄.
50 Most texts read 岑巖/巖岑, which drops the rhyme.

Poetic Exposition on Purifying My Longings

Li Zhijun 13; Chen Bojun 29; Guo Guang 22. Holzman 139.

18 Following Chen Bojun's proposed emendation of 季 to 李. While this requires emendation, it is superior to Guo Guang's tortuous attempt to make sense of the line.
20 Chen Bojun and Guo Guang disagree on the reference here. Guo Guang thinks that this refers to the Wu Prince Jizha 季札, enfeoffed in Yanling 延陵. Jizha made a famous trip to Lu and listened to a complete performance of the *Shijing*. Chen Bojun takes it as referring to Master Yan 師延, the music master of the last Shang king whose music was described as *mimi* 靡靡. *Mimi* is a quality with many meanings, one of which is "faint." This is a singularly problematic reference because Yan's music was described as "the tones of a falling state" 亡國之音—hardly appropriate for the most beautiful of sounds.
31 *Shugu* 黍穀, "millet and grain," may be the name of a mountain in Yan.
32 "Father," *fu* 父, has been supplied from the Xue Yingqi edition. It makes sense, but appears to be an emendation. The story later always uses gulls; but, as Chen Bojun notes, the *Lüshi chunqiu* version has *jing* 鶄, a kind of nocturnal heron, which also appears as *qing* 蜻, explained as *qingting* 蜻蜓, "dragonfly."
53 Translating *Taiyin* 太陰 as "Supreme Yin" avoids deciding which of the term's many meanings is intended here.
63 Fan Qin reads 嗟慱賤而失庚, with 薄 as a var. for 慱.

66 I have followed Chen Bojun's interpretation of *yunmeng* 雲夢, but a far more natural interpretation would be to take it as Yunmeng Park, from which King Xiang of Chu sighted Gaotang and was told the story of the goddess visiting a former king of Chu in his sleep. Li Zhijun underlines it as a proper name, which suggests that he understood it this way.

67 The Fan Qin version is missing the 造.

69 Fan Qin reads 桂/山. Chen Bojun understands this as "Cinnabar [red] Cave Mountain" 丹穴之山, in *Shanhai jing* the dwelling of a phoenix-like bird. Guo Guang takes it as a mountain in Hubei.

87 I generally am suspicious about variants in the Xue Yingqi edition but the Xue reading of 颸/思 is not only attractive in this context but also consistent with the frequent omission of radicals in the text. The *si* "cool breeze" could indeed "cleanse" the road in the following line.

92ff. At this point Holzman shifts the subject to the woman, which is an attractive possibility. There are conflicting indices of whether the subject here is the male suitor or the desired woman. Line 93 decides the case in favor of Holzman's reading as a clear reference to Fu Fei, the Luo River goddess, with whom Qu Yuan sought to make a match in the "Li Sao." Stanza 57 concludes: "at dawn she bathed her hair in Weipan Stream" 朝濯髮於洧盤. Giving directions to his entourage (ll. 105–6) marks the return of the male speaker.

95 This is a line from the "Seven Remonstrances" ("Qi jian" 七諫) in the *Chuci*.

96 *Taiping yulan* reads 霏/霞. *Beitang shuchao* and *Taiping yulan* read 裳/衣; this drops the rhyme.

97 This is the earliest occurrence of "Nine Blooms," *jiuying* 九英, and its meaning is uncertain. The next occurrence is in the sixth century agricultural treatise, *Qimin yaoshu* 齊民要術, where it is a plant. Because it is used in parallel with an asterism, scholars have guessed that this is a constellation, even though it is not mentioned in the standard astronomical treatises.

105 Chen Bojun thinks Changyi 常儀 is properly Changxi 常羲, a divine being mentioned in *Shanhai jing*. Guo Guang takes this Changyi as written, a somewhat obscure consort of Diku, a ruler of mythic antiquity. *Hanyu dacidian* offers a much later usage as the moon goddess Chang'e, under the mistaken claim that the Middle

Chinese pronunciations of *yi* 儀 and *e* 娥 were the same.

110 *Feifei* 斐斐 may be written 棐棐. Chen Bojun takes this as the immortal Lingyang Ziming 陵陽子明, but in his poetic exposition on the zither, Xi Kang uses the term for a musical piece.

113 Chen Bojun suggests emending *chao* 朝 to *qi* 期, Anqi being the name of an immortal. This is possible, but nowhere is Anqi associated with "vermillion shoes," or, far more likely, "pearled shoes" 珠履.

114–116 There are good reasons to think these lines are a textual mess and seriously garbled. *Jian* 踐 or *nie* 躡 are verbs appropriate for *lü* 履, while *fu* 敷 commonly takes *xi* 席 as its object. If we try to make sense of the text as written, in l. 114 we might take 假 as a loan for 下; but 席下 is well attested as literally "under the mat," rather than "by the mat," or "at the foot of the mat." We could take 集帷 as "perch by the curtain," but the only other usage refers, appropriately, to birds. 114 and 115 make no sense, while 116 makes sense but is incomprehensible in the context.

127 Chen Bojun reads 菲/芳.

136 Fan Qin reads 輔/拊.

153 Chen Bojun reads 靜/盡 following Xue Yingqi.

160 Li Zhijun and Chen Bojun both endorse emending 臍 to 臏.

164 Reading 或 as 惑.

Poetic Exposition on Kangfu

Li Zhijun 18; Chen Bojun 19; Guo Guang 17. Holzman 36.

3 Fan Qin reads 地/城.

6 Chen Bojun reads 濕/涅.

7 Chen Bojun reads 客/容.

20 Chen Bojun reads 濟/齊. Ji 濟 is the intended sense.

41 Fan Qin reads 彌/爾.

42 By parallelism "singing doves" should be a place name, but no such place is known. Commentators are at a loss.

44–45 Chen Bojun reads: 鴟梟群翔，狐狸萬□.

57 Fan Qin reads 齒/遁.

61 Chen Bojun reads 匽/匿, which is the Fan Qin reading.

Part 2: The Poetry of Xi Kang (ca. 223 – ca. 262)

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Introduction

Xi Kang 嵇康 (also Ji Kang; ca. 223 – ca. 262) is one of the least studied major poets of early medieval China. His essays and thought have consumed much of the critical attention, while his biography and lore have captivated scholarly interest and popular imagination alike. Known as one of the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove 竹林七賢, he is often portrayed in several guises: cavorting in wild abandon with his free-spirited friends, playing the zither in loose hanging robes, or seeking immortality through herbs and drugs. All available documents—his own writings, biographical records and anecdotes (the line between the latter two is often fine)—suggest an obsession with escaping the world he lived in and roaming with immortals in a realm beyond.[1] Like his friend Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–263), Xi Kang wrote about his desire for transcendence and elevated it by outlining a program for achieving immortality. He advocated and defended a host of practices and abstinences, such as avoidance of grain and wine and consumption of red sulfur and purple mushroom, under the rubric of "nurturing life" 養生. Two of his essays describe his program for transcendence in practically professional detail.

Xi Kang's writings on transcendence, coupled with stories about his experimentation with elixirs and his association with recluses in the mountains, not only point to the other world he seeks but also implicitly indict the one he wants to leave behind. A key reason behind his escapist predilection is the tumultuous political climate of his time. Xi Kang lived in a perilous age engendered by factional conflicts within the court, a crucial political and social reality that would shape the arc of his life. Merely a few decades after the founding of the Wei dynasty in 220, the

1 Information about Xi Kang's life is scattered throughout early medieval sources, such as *Wei shu* 魏書 in *Sanguo zhi* 三國志, excerpts from lost histories quoted in Pei Songzhi's 裴松之 commentary to *Sanguo zhi*, *Jin shu* 晉書, and *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語. The most comprehensive English language accounts of his biography are: R. H. van Gulik, *Hsi K'ang and His Poetical Essay on the Lute* (Tokyo: Sophia University, Monumenta Nipponica Monograph, 1968); and Robert Henricks, "Hsi K'ang (233–262): His Life, Literature, and Thought" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1976).

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ruling Cao 曹 clan found their fortunes beginning to wane.[2] The second Wei emperor Cao Rui 曹叡 died in 239, and over the next ten years a power play unfolded between the two co-regents chosen to assist the child emperor Cao Fang 曹芳: Cao Shuang 曹爽, an imperial clansman whose main qualifications were his birth and connections, and Sima Yi 司馬懿 (179–251), a distinguished general who had served several generations of the Cao family. Cao Shuang at first enjoyed the upper hand in this political tug of war, having ostensibly forced Sima Yi into retirement. Sima Yi, however, had the long game in mind: he feigned senility in an elaborate ploy to fool Cao Shuang into lowering his guard. In 249, while Cao Shuang and Cao Fang traveled to the former emperor's tomb for a ritual visit, Sima Yi made his big move. He and his supporters seized the capital, blocked the route to the city from the tomb site, and sent a petition to Cao Fang to have Cao Shuang removed. Believing that his life and wealth might be spared if he relinquished power, Cao Shuang agreed to surrender. Miscalculating both events and people to the very end, Cao Shuang was promptly executed together with his family and supporters.

The consolidation of power by the Sima clan spanned sixteen years, between 249 when Sima Yi eliminated his single major rival and became the de facto ruler, and 265 when Yi's grandson, Sima Yan 司馬炎 (r. 265–290), formally established the Jin dynasty (265–420). Politics during this time was especially risky and often bloody. The *History of the Jin* 晉書 notes that during the Wei-Jin transition, "few members of the gentry remained alive."[3] Officials needed to maneuver deftly around the Sima family, who in name still served the Cao-Wei dynasty but in effect ruled through the puppet emperors. Xi Kang's friend Ruan Ji escaped falling victim to the intrigues of court politics by speaking only of the "mysterious and remote" and avoiding commenting directly on current affairs, and for a time Xi Kang seemed to have felt that this strategy could work for him as well. He largely stayed out of politics, except entertaining briefly the idea of raising troops to support Guanqiu Jian's 毌丘儉 revolt in 255 against the new Sima regime.[4] Although he wrote

2 The Wei is commonly also referred to as the Cao-Wei dynasty, to distinguish it from another dynasty of the same name in the Northern Dynasties period (386–581).

3 *Jin shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 49.1360.

4 Little is known about Xi Kang's interest in supporting this revolt, except that Shan Tao dissuaded him against actual involvement. See Pei Songzhi's commentary to the *Sanguo zhi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 21.607.

specifically about his hope to become a transcendent, he was careful to discuss generically the dangers that beset this world. In the same aloof spirit, Xi Kang flouted conventions of behavior and rules of polite society. He once ignored Zhong Hui 鍾會, an important official who came to pay him a visit; on another occasion, he proudly told a friend that he would refuse to bathe despite being infested with lice. In evincing such disregard for decorum, Xi Kang was behaving similarly to some of his Bamboo Grove associates: Ruan Ji, for one, violated ritual prescription not to eat meat and drink wine while in mourning for his mother, and Liu Ling 劉伶 was notorious for his excessive drinking and his propensity to sit around naked. Once when derided by visitors who were treated to his full exposure, Liu retorted that he took heaven and earth as his pillars and roof, his house as his pants and robe. "What are you gentlemen doing in my pants?" he wryly asked them.[5] None of these associates of Xi Kang found himself in prison or under the executioner's axe for such flagrant violations of propriety; Xi Kang, in contrast, was not so fortunate.

The story of Xi Kang's downfall and demise is complex with several incidents and factors likely playing determining roles. Most significantly, in 261, he was implicated in a rather sordid feud between two brothers with whom he was friends, Lü An 呂安 and Lü Xun 呂巽. The younger of the two, Lü An, discovered that he was cuckolded by his wife and his elder brother, and he intended to denounce the incestuous affair publicly. In a preemptive move, Xun accused An of beating their mother, and the hapless cuckold was exiled to the frontier for his alleged unfilial conduct. An then wrote a self-defense in which he mentioned Xi Kang, perhaps as a character witness. A favorite of the Sima family, Zhong Hui, who was supposedly still smarting from Xi Kang's snub during his visit to the poet's home, seized the opportunity to take his revenge by accusing Xi Kang of arrogant disengagement and corruption of morals. Xi Kang was first sentenced to prison, then to death, along with Lü An. Disengagement, normally considered a strategy to safeguard life, became one of the reasons for which Xi Kang lost his life as it was recast as spurning the authority of the establishment. This interpretation of his purposes seems to have governed the manner in which those in power understood or at least used against him a now famous letter from the poet to his friend

5 See *Shishuo xinyu*, 23/6.

Shan Tao 山濤, in which he states his resolute refusal to involve himself in official life. Other possible factors in Xi Kang's demise may be inferred as well, including his association by marriage to the Cao-Wei imperial clan and his consideration of supporting Guanqiu Jian's revolt against the Sima regime.

Whatever the external reasons, Xi Kang himself felt that his troubles ultimately stemmed from his straight-laced personality and lack of prudence. In his above-mentioned letter to Shan Tao, Xi Kang bemoaned how he tried to model himself after the ever cautious Ruan Ji but lacked his friend's success and, more importantly, the particular favor of Generalissimo Sima Zhao 司馬昭, the second son of Sima Yi and successor to power after the death of his elder brother, Sima Shi 司馬師 in 255. In his anguished poem written while imprisoned, "A Poem on My Indignation in Confinement" 幽憤詩, Xi Kang reflected on his guilelessness and even naiveté: "I was fond of doing good, but ignorant about people." And again: "My nature is such that I would never injure others, / Yet it constantly brings about resentment and hatred." This was probably the last work Xi Kang ever wrote, though he did not know it would be at the time, since he envisaged how he would change his ways: "In doing good, stay clear from fame. Obey the times and keep to a respectful silence." Xi Kang was never able to implement this method for nurturing life. He was soon publically executed. It is said that on the eve of his execution, ever cool and calm, he played his zither one last time.

A Transcendent All Too Human

Stories about Xi Kang's pursuit of transcendence abound. For example, it is recounted that he once went into the mountains with a recluse who had obtained a piece of stalactite that he split in half to share with Xi Kang. After eating the mineral, both men "froze and became like stone."[6] Another time, Xi Kang roamed the mountains in search of herbs and drugs and was mistaken for a supernatural being by the wood-cutters and herb-gatherers who came upon him.[7] Such anecdotes certainly make for a more sensational narrative, but they divert attention away from his very human side. His poetic writings may showcase a dominant theme

6 *Jin shu*, 49.1370.
7 Ibid.

of transcendence, yet they are enmeshed in a complex web of relationships with family and friends who are the subjects or recipients of his poems. In a lament about his deceased mother and an elder brother, "Thinking of My Loved Ones" 思親詩, Xi Kang shows himself to be inconsolable about his loss with expressions of pain and grief in nearly every line. In the poem written during his imprisonment, he traces his unbridled behavior, which he believed to be the source of his present woes, to the excessive indulgence lavished on him—kindly and perhaps irresponsibly—by his mother and elder brothers. His father, Xi Zhao 嵇昭, who might have exerted more authority, died when he was a mere infant. In the longest set of poems in his extant collection, "Tetrasyllabic Poems Presented to My Elder Brother the Cultivated Talent on His Entry into the Army, Eighteen Poems" 四言贈兄秀才入軍詩十八首, Xi Kang expresses both longing and fear for Xi Xi 嵇喜, who apparently had entered into the service of the Sima family. As much as these poems profess a sincere love for a brother, they also emphasize the vast philosophical differences and antithetical lifestyle choices that separate the two of them. The tensions that pulse through Xi Kang's communication to his elder brother, born of a dynamic mix of expressions—from affection, nostalgia, disappointment, admonition, to playful jabbing—reveal these poems to be a poignant and rare testimony to sibling discord in Chinese literary history.

Xi Kang's correspondence with his friends shows him to be a social actor engaged in ordinary situations, such as longing for absent friends, expressing admiration for good men or voicing disagreements of perspective. In one example, "A Response to the Two Guos, Three Poems" 答二郭詩三首, he treats all of these situations in a single set of parting poems. Guo Xiazhou 郭遐周 and Guo Xiashu 郭遐叔, likely two brothers, had written poems to Xi Kang as he was leaving his home, probably to escape the fallout from Guanqiu Jian's failed rebellion. In his response poems, Xi Kang praises the brothers for delighting in the Way and seeking nothing else. Having bonded with such fine friends, he expresses a reluctance to part with them and ponders how he shall yearn for their company. Friends do not always share the same point of view and may misunderstand one another, however, and such is the basic point that Xi Kang devotes most of his response to address. His friends had consoled him with conventional advice regarding detachment and self-preservation: adapt with equanimity to changing circumstances and

await a more favorable time. Xi Kang, however, makes a real effort to explain himself to his friends: he tells them in no uncertain terms that he embraces a different notion of transcendence, one that involves not mere preservation and detachment *within* this world but a departure *from* this world.

Never one to shy away from a good debate or argument with a friend, Xi Kang wrote a spirited and lengthy response to Xiang Xiu's 向秀 refutation of his "Essay on Nurturing Life" 養生論. An even more famous case of disagreement was Xi Kang's fierce rejection of Shan Tao's intention to recommend him for office in a missive expounding on nine things the free-spirited poet cannot stand or condone, thereby amply demonstrating why he was not suitable for office as his friend had thought. This work is known by the title "Letter to Shan Yujuan [Tao] Breaking off Relationship" 與山巨源絕交書, although no place in the letter does Xi Kang indicate that he intended to sever ties with his friend.[8] The earliest mention of Xi Kang's letter to Shan Tao in historical sources describes its content as merely a "rejection [of a proposal]"; a few centuries later, it came to be labeled a letter "breaking off relationship," probably by over-zealous editors and critics who had determined that such an extreme reaction to a friend's proposal better fit the pure image of Xi Kang as a lofty, otherworldly type.[9]

Xi Kang's staunch eschewal of office, compounded by his provocative, absolute statements such as "I am always finding fault with [the founding rulers] Tang 湯 and Wu 武 and belittling the Duke of Zhou and Confucius," and "Laozi and Zhuang Zhou are my masters," have only inflated the impression of a radical, socially and morally disengaged being.[10] Yet the question of whether Xi Kang shunned traditional ethics needs to be handled with more nuance. In an essay entitled "Elucidating Self-Interest" 釋私論, Xi Kang evaluates the binary positions of con-

8 By contrast, in a letter to Lü Xun, Xi Kang clearly indicated that he intended to sever ties with the scoundrel after it became known that Lü had slandered his own wronged brother.

9 Xu Gongchi 徐公持 suspects that it was Xiao Tong 蕭統 or Liu Xie 劉勰 who first added "breaking off relationship" to the title. See "Xi Kang 'Yu Shan Juyuan juejiao shu' fei juejiao zhi shu lun" 嵇康《與山巨源絕交書》非絕交之書論, *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 3 (2008): 197–216.

10 See "Letter to Shan Tao," in *Wen xuan* 文選, ed. Xiao Tong, with commentary by Li Shan (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), 43.1927, 1924.

cealment and self-interest (*si* 私) versus openness and public-mindedness (*gong* 公). He casts the former position in pejorative terms to signify that harboring self-interest and operating with self-interested calculation are shadowy behaviors belonging to small men. On the contrary, Xi Kang champions the public-mindedness of the gentleman who does not adhere to the conventional rights and wrongs of the world, thereby suggesting a Zhuangzian ability to see things on a level. The gentleman acts "according to his heart" 任心 in a dispassionate way, making his action right every time. Xi Kang thus extols the public-minded spirit of past worthies and advisers to rulers such as the Duke of Zhou and Guan Zhong 管仲, even quoting the latter in hearty agreement: "'When the gentleman practices the Way, he forgets about his own person.' These words surely are right!" This clearly indicates that Xi Kang did not reject service as such. Rather, he advocated a particular sort of public-mindedness and frank-heartedness: one should cast aside conventional rights and wrongs and make the gauge for action one's natural inclinations and authentic feelings. Therefore, it is in the context of this new type of ethics, rather than the absence of any, that Xi Kang's famous slogan should be interpreted: "transcend the doctrine of names and follow the natural" 越名教而任自然.[11] The doctrine of names was associated with traditional ethics that emphasized service as a matter of principle and conformity to ritual codes, but Xi Kang's statement has been traditionally plucked out of context and made to define the libertines and non-conformists of the time.

A New Poetics

In developing the main theme of transcendence in his poetry, Xi Kang draws vocabulary, images, and ideas from at least two sources: a well-established mode, "roaming with transcendents" 遊仙, first seen in works such as "Distant Roaming" 遠遊 and "Encountering Sorrow" 離騷 anthologized in the *Lyrics of Chu* 楚辭; and an emergent mode of discourse known as "learning of the Mysterious [Dao]" 玄學. This so-called *xuan* learning probed into the Mystery (*xuan*) of the Dao or Way through concepts and paradoxes introduced in the *Laozi* 老子,

11 For the text of "Elucidating Self-Interest," see *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu*, ed. Dai Mingyang, 233–43.

Zhuangzi 莊子, and *Classic of Changes* 易經. Poetic use of these philosophical texts was not unprecedented in Xi Kang's time, as references to Lao-Zhuang notions can be found, for instance, in the poetry of the brothers Cao Pi 曹丕 and Cao Zhi 曹植, luminaries of the Jian'an 建安 period (196–220). However, such references did not constitute a major aspect of these writers' works but rather marked in a general way ideas of transcendence associated with Lao-Zhuang thought. Rarely did the Caos quote directly from the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*. In contrast, Xi Kang's poems freely appropriate quotations from or allusions to these works. Equally importantly, his poems incorporate materials from many other sources as well. There is hardly another third-century poet who made such comprehensive use as Xi Kang did of an extensive and heterogeneous set of resources that included the *Classic of Poetry* 詩經, *Lyrics of Chu*, Jian'an poetry, and *xuan* discourse. By drawing from nearly all of the major poetic traditions before his time, Xi Kang availed himself of the full range of his literary inheritance. By combining these established poetic traditions together with current philosophical discourse, Xi Kang developed a distinct, new type of poetic language that utilized traditional as well as unconventional materials.

Xi Kang's major work, the group of eighteen poems to his brother, serves as an illustrative example. The poet mines the *Classic of Poetry*, which features natural images and treats the theme of separation, for ready lines imbued with evocative imagery and symbolic associations. He draws from the *Lyrics of Chu* for established moral allegories of virtue and corruption to distinguish himself from his brother and his new camp as well as for gestures and patterns that identify the roaming transcendent. For his treatment of the military theme, the poet turns to Jian'an poetry: he casts Xi Xi, who was presumably entering the army as a civilian officer, as a heroic knight-errant in a description that echoes Cao Zhi's "White Horse" 白馬篇, rendering an extraordinary attribution of grandeur and prowess to his elder brother (whether out of pride or perhaps with a bit of playful irony). For lessons on quietism, self-preservation, and transcendence, Xi Kang borrows liberally from the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*. These are not inherently related, or even obviously compatible, frames of reference, and the poetic series continually shifts between these different systems of meaning and stylistic registers. Yet Xi Kang weaves together these various strands in the style of a new early medieval intertextuality, which makes opportune use of the heteroge-

neous and growing assemblage of available textual and cultural resources to compose poetry.

Xi Kang was likewise a trailblazer in the development of Chinese landscape poetry. Earlier descriptions of nature had not made it the object of sustained observation and appreciation, much less a store of hidden truths. Nature generally functioned as an affective analogue for human situations, a source of symbols connoting human virtue or vice, or a provider of scenes and processes that elicit latent feelings in man. A number of Xi Kang's "Tetrasyllabic Verse, Eleven Poems" 四言詩十一首 reveal a different approach, one in which the poetic gaze surveys the patterns, processes and laws in nature and thereby probes into the Dao that operates in and is manifest through nature and its work. Nature in all its splendor (mountains, isles, waters, billows, trees, plants, and water fowl) emerges as the object of aesthetic appraisal and philosophical contemplation. Nature is seen as what grants visible, material access to the workings of the Dao. Mountains and rivers become the setting that inspires the poet to let loose his thoughts or feelings. The relationship between man and nature in these poems grows intimate as nature is regarded as friend and companion. Xi Kang's examples are usually overlooked in histories of Chinese landscape poetry, even though they were composed a century before the Lanting 蘭亭 poems (sometimes rendered as "Orchid Pavilion" poems), which have been generally considered to mark the dawning of landscape poetry. Yet Xi Kang's poems are key to a proper understanding of the development of nature as a major site and source of early medieval poetry and of the crucial role of *xuan* learning in this development.

Text and Editions

The earliest extant editions of Xi Kang's *Collected Works* date to the Ming dynasty. From bibliographical records, we know that his collection survived independently and circulated under a different title from the Six Dynasties through the Tang, Song and Yuan periods. The "Bibliographical Treatise" of the *History of the Sui* 隋書 lists a *Xi Kang ji* 嵇康集 of thirteen fascicles, with a note stating that in the Liang dynasty the collection consisted of fifteen fascicles. Likewise the "Bibliographical Treatise" of both the *New* and *Old History of the Tang* 舊唐書，新唐書 lists *Xi Kang ji* in fifteen fascicles. However, by the time that the

"Bibliographical Treatise" of the *History of the Song* 宋史 was compiled, the collection was reduced to ten fascicles, a number that has not changed since. There are two plausible explanations for this discrepancy: 1) at least a third of Xi Kang's works was lost by the Song, a fate not at all unusual for early medieval collections; 2) the reduction by a third could reflect editorial differences in compiling and arranging texts, a possibility that the Song scholar Wang Mao 王楙 seems to have meant to suggest when he concluded, after comparing different sources of Xi Kang's works, that he had no idea what the additional five fascicles in the record of the fifteen-fascicle collection might have contained.

The collection resurfaces in the Ming under the title *Xi Zhongsan ji* 嵇中散集 (The Collected Works of Courtier Xi). By far the most important Ming editions are: Huang Xingzeng's 黃省曾 1525 print edition of *Xi Zhongsan ji* (reprinted in *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊; hereafter Huang Edition) and Wu Kuan's 吳寬 (1435–1504) manuscript text of *Xi Kang ji* (hereafter Wu Manuscript), which later circulated with corrections in red and black ink. Either one or both texts have served as the basis for most subsequent editions. Both editions allegedly have a Song pedigree, but while the modern scholar Lu Xun 魯迅 believed that the source for both was the same, the two editions differ substantially in terms of variants and, more obviously, their titling and grouping of texts. Lu Qinli 逯欽立, a modern editor of Xi Kang's *Collected Works*, published a study of the differences between the poetic texts in the Huang and Wu editions.[12] There are two principal modern editions, each of which uses one Ming edition as the basis and collates mainly against the other Ming edition. Lu Xun's *Xi Kang ji* (colophon dated 1913; preface dated 1924; published posthumously in 1938) uses the Wu Manuscript as the base text, whereas Dai Mingyang's 戴明揚 *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* 嵇康集校注 (published posthumously in 1962) is based on the Huang Edition. Both editors offer emendations or suggestions in instances where neither of the two principal Ming editions seems accurate. Moreover, both include variants from several other Ming editions, the *Wen xuan* (which includes eight of Xi Kang's poetic works under four titles), and other literary anthologies. Dai Mingyang's edition also provides extensive annotations, and since its publication it has generally

12 See "Ba *Xi Kang ji* diyi juan shi" 跋《嵇康集》第一卷詩, *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan guankan* 3.1 (1947): 25–27.

been regarded as the best and most comprehensive modern source for Xi Kang's works.

As with all modern editors of Xi Kang's works, I have drawn my texts from various sources and collated against other editions. My texts are primarily based on the Huang/Dai edition, though in certain cases they follow the Wu/Lu edition or the *Wen xuan* version. In each case, the modern edition is indicated at the end of the text. I provide basic annotation in the footnotes. The numerous quotations, allusions, and adaptations of other texts found in Xi Kang's poems, along with important variants, textual corruptions, interpretive ambiguities, and alternate renderings, are treated in Additional Notes.

五言贈秀才詩

雙鸞匿景曜
戢翼太山崖
抗首漱朝露
晞陽振羽儀
長鳴戲雲中
時下息蘭池
自謂絕塵埃
終始永不虧
何意世多艱
虞人來我維
雲網塞四區
高羅正參差
奮迅勢不便
六翮無所施
隱姿就長纓
卒為時所羈
單雄翻獨逝
哀吟傷生離

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This poem was written to Xi Xi, Xi Kang's elder brother. Xi Xi served under the Sima clan, which challenged the Cao Wei imperial family but to which Xi Kang was associated by marriage.

A Pentasyllabic Poem Presented to the Cultivated Talent (also titled "Thoughts of the Ancients in Pentasyllabic Verse" 五言古意)

A pair of simurghs hide their dazzling brilliance,
Folding their wings on the cliffs of Mount Tai.
They raise their heads, rinsing their mouths with morning dew;
They bask in the sun, augustly straightening their feathers.
Letting out long cries as they sport in the clouds,
At times they descend to rest by the thoroughwort pool.
They say they have cut off from the dust and dirt,
From beginning to end they would never fail this.
How could they know the world's many dangers?
Then the foresters came to mesh them.
Cloud-like nets filled all four directions;
Snares in the heights spread hither and thither.
Quickly away one tries to fly, but the situation is unfavorable,
His six quill-feathers have no way to unfold.
Concealing his looks, he acquiesces to the long tassels—[1]
In the end, restrained and bound by the times.
The lone male bird soars far away on his own;
With woeful cries, he mourns this parting in life.

1 Synecdoche for an official's cap.

徘徊戀儔侶
慷慨高山陂
鳥盡良弓藏
謀極身必危
吉凶雖在己
世路多嶮巇
安得反初服
抱玉寶六奇
逍遙遊太清
攜手長相隨

四言贈兄秀才入軍詩十八首

I

鴛鴦于飛
肅肅其羽
朝遊高原
夕宿蘭渚

1 After the strategist Han Xin 韓信 aided the general Liu Bang 劉邦 in defeating his chief rival to found the Han dynasty, he met with the new emperor's distrust. He used several analogies to express the dramatic change in his fate since he lost his use value and now posed as a threat.

2 Jade here refers to one's genuine, innate talent, which should be harbored and

Pacing back and forth, he yearns for his mate;
Fervent and frustrated, he stands on a high mountain slope.
When the birds are no more, good bows are stored away;
When strategies are no longer needed, one meets with harm.[1]
Though good or bad fortune depends on oneself,
The paths of this world have many hazards.
How shall you be able to return to your first garb,
Harbor the jade and treasure the six ingenious plans?[2]
To roam free and easy in the Great Purity,
With us holding hands, forever in each other's company?

[Dai Mingyang, ed., *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu*, 3–6]

These poems were written to Xi Xi, likely upon his entry into the service of the Sima clan. Marked by affection, disappointment, admonition, and playful jabbing, they reveal Xi Kang's complicated relationship with his brother.

Poems Presented to My Elder Brother the Cultivated Talent on His Entry into the Army, Eighteen Poems

I

A couple of mandarin ducks take flight,[3]
Flap, flap sound their wings.
At dawn, they roam over the high plain;
At dusk, they lodge at the thoroughwort isle.

---

treasured. "Six ingenious plans" refer to the strategies that Chen Ping 陳平 famously devised to aide Liu Bang in pacifying the empire.

3 There are numerous verbatim quotes from *Classic of Poetry* in this group of poems, beginning with the first line. All such quotes are hereafter identified in Additional Notes.

邕邕和鳴
顧眄儔侶
俛仰慷慨
優遊容與

II

鴛鴦于飛
嘯侶命儔
朝遊高原
夕宿中洲
交頸振翼
容與清流
咀嚼蘭蕙
俛仰優遊

III

泳彼長川
言息其滸
陟彼高岡
言刈其楚
嗟我征邁
獨行踽踽

Yong, *yong*, they call in harmony,
Each looking back on its mate.
Gazing down and up, at ease and joyful,
They relax in carefree roaming.

II

A couple of mandarin ducks take flight,
Each whistles at its mate, calls to its partner.
At dawn, they roam over the high plain;
At dusk, they lodge in the middle of the isle.
With their necks entwined, their wings outstretched,
They relax by the clear river flow.
Chewing thoroughwort and melilotus,
They gaze down and up in their carefree roaming.

III

I swim in that long river
And rest on its bank.
I climb that high hillcrest
And cut the wild thorn.
Alas! I journey afar,
Alone I travel, in utter solitude.

仰彼凱風
涕泣如雨

IV

泳彼長川
言息其沚
陟彼高岡
言刈其杞
嗟我獨征
靡瞻靡恃
仰彼凱風
載坐載起

V

穆穆惠風
扇彼輕塵
奕奕素波
轉此遊鱗
伊我之勞
有懷佳人
寤言永思
寔鍾所親

I look up at that temperate wind
And shed tears like the rain.

IV

I swim in the long river
And rest on its islet.
I climb that high hillcrest
And cut the corkscrew willow.
Alas! I journey alone,
Without another to look to or lean on.
I look up at that temperate wind,
Now sitting, now standing.

V

Mild is the gentle breeze
That fans the light dust.
Towering white waves
Roll along the swimming fish.
Oh, my pains,
From thinking of the fair one:
Awake I am forever longing,
Truly he is the one I hold dear.

VI

所親安在
舍我遠邁
棄此蓀芷
襲彼蕭艾
雖曰幽深
豈無顛沛
言念君子
不遐有害

VII

人生壽促
天地長久
百年之期
孰云其壽
思欲登仙
以濟不朽
攬轡踟躕
仰顧我友

VI

The one I hold dear—where is he?
He left me to sojourn far away.
Casting off sweet-flag and angelica,
He now dons wormwood and mugwort.
Though that place may be secluded and remote,
Is there not falling into trouble?[1]
I think of the gentleman
Being not far from harm's way.

VII

The years of man's life are fleeting;
Heaven and earth are long lasting.
A span of a hundred years—
Who says this is longevity?
I long to ascend to immortality
And cross over to the realm that never decays.
I pull back the reins and waver,
Looking back to my friend.

1 "Falling into trouble" refers to the image of a collapsed tree, a symbol of the fallen Shang dynasty in the *Classic of Poetry*.

VIII

我友焉之
隔茲山岡
誰謂河廣
一葦可航
徒恨永離
逝彼路長
瞻仰弗及
徙倚彷徨

IX

良馬既閑
麗服有暉
左攬繁弱
右接忘歸
風馳電逝
躡景追飛
淩厲中原
顧眄生姿

VIII

My friend—where is he going?
Divided by this mountain ridge we are.
Who says the river is wide?
With a reed, I can sail it.
In vain I resent this everlasting separation,
Now that he has gone far off on the long road.
I tilt my head, my gaze does not reach;
I linger and waver in hesitation.

IX

His fine steed well trained,
His beautiful garb sparkling.
With the left hand he holds the Fanruo Bow;
With the right, he plants the Wanggui Arrow.[1]
He gallops like the wind, gone like lightning,
Tracking shadows and chasing the flying.
Swiftly he traverses the central plain,
Glancing from left to right, he shows a fine bearing.

1 Fanruo and Wanggui refer respectively to the legendary bow and arrow of ancient times.

X

攜我好仇
載我輕車
南淩長阜
北厲清渠
仰落驚鴻
俯引淵魚
盤于遊田
其樂只且

XI

淩高遠眄
俯仰咨嗟
怨彼幽縶
邈爾路遐
雖有好音
誰與清歌
雖有姝顏
誰與發華
仰訊高雲
俯託輕波
乘流遠遁
抱恨山阿

X

I clasp the hand of my good companion
To ride in my light cart.
To the south we traverse the long mound;
To the north we cross a clear canal.
Looking up we fell a startled goose,
And downward we draw fish from the depths.
Roaming the fields in merriment—
What a joy this is!

XI

Riding high I gaze into the distance;
Looking up and down I heave a sigh.
I resent that he is detained and tethered,
How distant—the road is far!
Though fine tunes I have,
To whom do I sing my unaccompanied song?
Though a handsome countenance I have,
For whom can I display my splendor?
Looking up I tell to the high clouds,
And below I confide in the light waves.
I ride the current, retreating far away,
Clinging to resentment in a mountain bend.

XII

輕車迅邁
息彼長林
春木載榮
布葉垂陰
習習谷風
吹我素琴
交交黃鳥
顧儔弄音
感悟馳情
思我所欽
心之憂矣
永嘯長吟

XIII

浩浩洪流
帶我邦畿
萋萋綠林
奮榮揚暉
魚龍瀺灂
山鳥群飛
駕言出遊
日夕忘歸

XII

My light cart swiftly travels;
I take rest in the tall woods.
Spring trees carry blooms,
While spread leaves hang shadows.
Gentle, gentle is the valley wind,
Blowing over my plain zither.
Chirp, chirp cry the yellow birds:
Looking at their mates, they make tunes.
Stirred to awareness, feelings rush on,
And I think of the one I esteem.
The sorrow of my heart
Leads me to prolong my whistling, sustain my singing.

XIII

Vast and mighty is the river's flow,
Which girds our royal domain.
Lush, lush is the green forest,
Where plants display their blooms and show their radiance.
Scaled fish swish softly in the water;
Mountain birds fly in flocks.
I drive my carriage for an outing,
And at sunset I forget to return.

思我良朋
如渴如饑
願言不獲
愴矣其悲

XIV

息徒蘭圃
秣馬華山
流磻平皋
垂綸長川
目送歸鴻
手揮五絃
俯仰自得
游心太玄
嘉彼釣叟
得魚忘筌
郢人逝矣
誰與盡言

1 A reference to the *qin*-zither.

2 This alludes to a parable in *Zhuangzi* about language and meaning that advocates discarding the vehicle (trap, language) after the goal has been attained (fish, meaning).

I think of my fine friend,
A yearning like thirst and hunger.
My wish cannot be had—
How desolating is this sadness!

XIV

I have my attendant rest in the thoroughwort garden,
And let my horse graze on the blooming mountain.
I shoot an arrow across the flat marsh,
And cast my fishing line into the long river.
My eyes send off the returning geese;
My hands wave across the five strings.[1]
I look up and down in self-contentment,
And let my mind roam in the Grand Mystery.
How fine was the fisherman,
Who caught a fish and forgot about the trap.[2]
The man from Ying has departed—[3]
Now with whom can I speak freely?

3 "The man of Ying" alludes to a story in *Zhuangzi* about sympathetic understanding between friends. There once was a plasterer from Ying who so trusted his friend Carpenter Shi that he asked the carpenter to slice off specks of mud that got on his nose. The carpenter wielded his axe like the wind, while his friend stood still without losing his calm countenance.

XV

閑夜肅清
朗月照軒
微風動袿
組帳高褰
旨酒盈樽
莫與交歡
鳴琴在御
誰與鼓彈
仰慕同趣
其馨若蘭
佳人不存
能不永歎

XVI

乘風高逝
遠登靈丘
託好松喬
攜手俱游
朝發太華
夕宿神州
彈琴詠詩
聊以忘憂

XV

In the still night, a somber calm,
A bright moon shines on the balcony.
A light breeze stirs my gown;
A silk curtain is drawn high.
Fine wine fills my chalice,
But there is none with whom to share such pleasure.
The zither by my side,
For whom do I strike and strum it?
I yearn and long for my kindred spirit,
Whose fragrance is like thoroughwort.
Since the fair one is no longer here,
Can I help but heave long sighs?

XVI

I ride the wind to my lofty retreat,
Where far away, I climb the numinous hills.[1]
I have befriended Red Pine and Wangzi Qiao;[2]
Clasping their hands, I roam together with them.
In the morning, we set out from Mount Tai Hua,[3]
And in the evening, we lodge at the Divine Island.
I play the zither and intone poems,
So as to forget my sorrows for a while.

---

1 Numinous hills are where immortals supposedly resided.

2 Two ancient immortals.

3 Probably a reference to the Western Marchmount, Mount Hua.

XVII

琴詩自樂
遠遊可珍
含道獨往
棄智遺身
寂乎無累
何求於人
長寄靈岳
怡志養神

XVIII

流俗難悟
逐物不還
至人遠鑒
歸之自然
萬物為一
四海同宅
與彼共之
予何所惜

XVII

I delight myself with my zither and verse;
Distant roaming is worth treasuring.
I embrace the Way and go forth alone,
Discarding wisdom and leaving behind self.
In stillness, I have no entanglements,
So what have I to ask from others?
For long I shall consign myself to the numinous hills,
Pleasing my will and nurturing my spirit.

XVIII

Those drifting in the vulgar world are hard to awaken:
They chase after things without turning back.[1]
The Perfected Man reflects on the distant,[2]
Always returning to what is natural.[3]
The myriad things are one with him,[4]
Just as all within the four seas are under one roof.
To share in that with him,
What is there for me to regret?

1 The logician Hui Shi was mocked thus in *Zhuangzi*, which casts this sparring partner of Zhuangzi as capable of merely achieving clever, dazzling expositions of logic rather than an understanding of the Way.

2 The perfected man, or Daoist sage, in *Zhuangzi* is said to have no self.

3 A verbatim quote from the Grand Historian's appraisal of Zhuangzi in the *Historical Records*.

4 This alludes to a famous paradox in *Zhuangzi* about leveling arbitrary distinctions of time.

生若浮寄
暫見忽終
世故紛紜
棄之八戎
澤雉雖饑
不顧園林
安能服御
勞形苦心
身貴名賤
榮辱何在
貴得肆志
縱心無悔

幽憤詩

嗟余薄祜
少遭不造
哀煢靡識
越在繈緥

1 This refers to the brevity of life. It is based on a passage in *Zhuangzi*, in which the life of a sage is described as "a floating, his death rest."

2 This alludes to a story about championing the care for life over mere survival in *Zhuangzi*. It tells of a marsh pheasant choosing to walk great distances in search for

Life is like a floating lodge,[1]
Temporarily manifest, suddenly ended.
The causes of the world are chaotic and confusing;
I abandon it and travel beyond the Eight Borders.
Though the marsh pheasant is starving,
It does not yearn for gardens and parks.[2]
How can one submit to servitude?
It would only wear out the body and weary the mind.
The self is valuable, the name worthless.
Wherein do honor and disgrace reside?[3]
What is valuable is giving rein to one's aspirations,
Freeing one's mind, with no regrets.

[Dai Mingyang, ed., *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu*, 6–20]

Xi Kang's good friend Lü An was cuckolded by his wife and his elder brother, Lü Xun. Lü An sought to expose their affair, but in a preemptive move Xun made a false accusation against his brother to the authorities. When Xi Kang tried to help his friend, his own enemy Zhong Hui seized the opportunity to slander him. Kang was subsequently imprisoned and later executed. This poem, which he wrote in prison, is probably the last work he wrote.

A Poem on My Indignation in Confinement

Alas! I have few blessings in life;
In my youth, I encountered misfortune.[4]
I could not know the sorrow of being orphaned—
I was then still in my swaddling clothes.

food instead of settling for a restrictive life in gardens and parks, a polite reference to servitude to the state.

3 In the philosophy of Laozi, disgrace follows favor, and honor leads to calamity.

4 Xi Kang's father died when he was merely an infant.

母兄鞠育
有慈無威
恃愛肆姐
不訓不師
爰及冠帶
憑寵自放
抗心希古
任其所尚
託好老莊
賤物貴身
志在守樸
養素全真
曰余不敏
好善闇人
子玉之敗
屢增惟塵
大人含弘
藏垢懷恥
民之多僻
政不由己

1 The capping ceremony for young men at the age of 20 *sui* in premodern China signified entry into adulthood.

2 Ziyu was a chief minister in the state of Chu during the Spring and Autumn Period. His arrogance and disregard of ritual propriety and the welfare of his troops ultimately led to his defeat and death. His mentor, Chief Minister Ziwen 子文,

My mother and elder brothers raised me;
They showed loving kindness but exerted no authority.
On account of their love, I had free rein and became spoiled,
Following neither formal tutelage nor teacher.
When I reached the age to receive a cap and sash,[1]
Owing to their indulgence, I had become unbridled.
Setting my mind aloft, I aspired to the ancients;
At my own will I followed what I exalt.
I committed my affection to Laozi and Zhuangzi,
Devalued external things and valued my own person.
My intent was to preserve the simple,
Nurture the plain and keep whole the genuine.
As I am not quick-witted,
I was fond of doing good but ignorant about people.
The defeat of Ziyu[2]
Resulted from constantly piling on dust.[3]
The Great Man embraces the vast,
Enabling him to endure humiliation and bear insult.
"When the people have many depravities,"
Government does not come from himself.[4]

had passed the post to him, an event that came to signify the promotion of the wrong man.

3 Based on the traditional interpretation of two lines in *Classic of Poetry* 206, the expression "piling on dust" has come to signify how promoting the wrong person can bring calamity to oneself.

4 That is to say, it is not influenced by the Great Man (metonymic for the gentleman or ideal ruler).

惟此褊心
顯明臧否
感悟思愆
怛若創痏
欲寡其過
謗議沸騰
性不傷物
頻致怨憎
昔慚柳惠
今愧孫登
內負宿心
外恧良朋
仰慕嚴鄭
樂道閑居
與世無營
神氣晏如
咨予不淑
嬰累多虞
匪降自天
寔由頑踈
理弊患結
卒致囹圄

This straight-laced mind of mine
Caused me to distinguish clearly between good and evil.
Stirred to awareness, I think of my offense;
My sadness is like an open wound.
I had wished to reduce the faults that I have,
But slanderous criticism foamed and frothed.
My nature is such that I would never injure others,
Yet it constantly brings about resentment and hatred.
Of the past, I am abashed before Liu Hui;[1]
Of today, I am ashamed before Sun Deng.[2]
On the inside, I failed to live up to my long-cherished intent;
On the outside, I am shamefaced before my good friend.
I look up in admiration of Yan and Zheng,[3]
Who delighted in the Way and dwelled in retirement.
They had no designs on the world,
So their spirit and pneuma were tranquil.
Alas! I was not good and true;
Entanglements have brought me many troubles.
They were not sent down by Heaven,
Indeed they stemmed from my stubbornness and carelessness.
Truth was enshrouded, calamity was formed,
And I ended up in prison.

1 Liu Hui (alt., Liuxia Hui) serves as an example of magnanimity in *Mencius*: he never quit his state despite being thrice removed from office.

2 An exalted recluse in Xi Kang's time who predicted that Xi Kang would get into trouble.

3 Yan Junping 嚴君平 and Zheng Zizhen 鄭子真 of the Han dynasty chose a humble life over the profit of office.

對答鄙訊
縶此幽阻
實恥訟冤
時不我與
雖曰義直
神辱志沮
澡身滄浪
豈云能補
嗈嗈鳴鴈
奮翼北遊
順時而動
得意忘憂
嗟我憤歎
曾莫能儔
事與願違
遘兹淹留
窮達有命
亦又何求
古人有言
善莫近名
奉時恭默
咎悔不生

I answered their coarse interrogation,
Still they bound me up in this dark den.
Truly I am ashamed to defend against this injustice;
I did not meet with a favorable time.
Although I am righteous and upright,
My spirit has been abased, my will has been dashed.
If I were to wash myself in the waters of Canglang,[1]
How could that remedy anything?
Yong, *yong*, cry the wild geese,
Flapping their wings as they journey north.
Following the course of time, they proceed;
Satisfying their wishes, they forget their woes.
Ah, with my sighs of indignation,
I am no match for them.
Events have gone against my wishes:
I have encountered this and will be detained for some time.
Failure and success are determined by fate,
So what is there to seek?
The ancients had a saying:
In doing good, stay clear from fame.
Obey the times and keep to a respectful silence,
Then calamity and remorse will not arise.

1 A literary reference to a verdant river, though scholars in the past had tried to identify this term with specific rivers in China.

萬石周慎
安親保榮
世務紛紜
祇攪予情
安樂必誡
乃終利貞
煌煌靈芝
一年三秀
予獨何為
有志不就
懲難思復
心焉內疚
庶勗將來
無馨無臭
采薇山阿
散髮巖岫
永嘯長吟
頤性養壽

Wanshi was circumspect and careful;[1]
He gave peace to his family and preserved their honor.
The affairs of the world are motley and chaotic;
They only disturb my emotions.
In peace and joy, one must take caution:
Only then will he end in favorable fortune.
Gleaming and glistening the numinous mushroom,
It blossoms three times a year.
Why is it that I alone
Have aspiration that cannot be fulfilled?
Warned by my difficulties, I think of reversing course;
My heart is filled with anguish and regret.
May I strive harder in the future,
Without making any scent or odor.[2]
I shall gather bracken fern on the mountain slopes,[3]
Loosen my hair and withdraw to the cliffs and caves.
I shall whistle long and prolong my chants,
Nurturing my nature, cultivating longevity.

[Dai Mingyang, ed., *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu*, 25–32]

1 Wanshi (literally "ten thousand bushels") refers to Shi Fen 石奮 and his four sons, who well served the Han dynasty and rose to high rank with a commensurate salary.

2 I.e. to go unnoticed.

3 I.e. to live the life of a mountain recluse. The phrase alludes to the story of Bo Yi 伯夷 and Shu Qi 叔齊, noble scions of the Shang dynasty, who refused to serve the succeeding Zhou dynasty or to eat the "grain of Zhou," choosing instead to gather bracken fern on Mount Shouyang. They ultimately starved to death while resolutely upholding their principles.

述志詩二首

I

潛龍育神軀
濯鱗戲蘭池
延頸慕大庭
寢足俟皇羲
慶雲未垂景
盤桓朝陽陂
悠悠非吾匹
跬步應俗宜
殊類難徧周
鄙議紛流離
轗軻丁悔吝
雅志不得施
耕耨感甯越
馬席激張儀
逝將離群侶
杖策追洪崖

1 Dating and Fu Xi 伏羲 were legendary rulers of the golden age in antiquity.

2 According to legend, once felicitous clouds of five colors appear, dragons will rise and take flight.

3 Ning Yue avoided the hardships of farming by studying hard; within fifteen years, he learned enough to become a teacher.

Telling of My Intent, Two Poems

I

The submerged dragon nurtures his divine body,
Bathing his scales, sporting in the thoroughwort pond.
Craning his neck, he yearns for Dating;
Resting his feet, he waits for Fu Xi.[1]
Felicitous clouds have yet to descend their auspicious hues,[2]
So he paces to and fro on the eastern slope of the mountain.
Common men are not my compeers,
I am slow to follow the ways of the vulgar.
It is difficult to fit in with a different kind:
Their base opinions scatter and spread all over.
On this rough and ragged path, I encounter regret and shame,
For my long held intent cannot be carried out.
Plowing and weeding so moved Ning Yue;[3]
A saddle blanket for a mat roused Zhang Yi.[4]
I shall go and leave behind this crowd of fellow men;
With a whip in hand, I pursue after Hong Ya.[5]

---

4 Zhang Yi, a Warring States strategist, was offered a saddle blanket for a seating mat, an insult planned by Su Qin 蘇秦 of the state of Zhao in order to push Zhang Yi to take his talent to the state of Qin. Once there, Zhang Yi was offered the position of minister and Su Qin claimed credit for Zhang's success, thus safeguarding Zhao from an attack by Qin.

5 An ancient immortal.

焦鵬振六翮
羅者安所羈
浮遊太清中
更求新相知
比翼翔雲漢
飲露餐瓊枝
多念世間人
夙駕咸驅馳
沖靜得自然
榮華安足為

II

斥鷃擅蒿林
仰笑神鳳飛
坎井蝤蛙宅
神龜安所歸
恨自用身拙
任意多永思
遠實與世殊
義譽非所希

1 Peng is a fabulous bird featured in *Zhuangzi*, which can fly incredibly high, thus signifying a limitless and boundless capacity.

2 A term that signifies both the sky and the way of heaven.

3 An allusion to a story in *Zhuangzi*, which contrasts the limited perspective of a

The brown *peng*-bird shakes his six quill-feathers,[1]
How could nets restrain him?
Drifting and roaming in the Great Purity,[2]
Again I search for new acquaintances.
Wing beside wing, we soar through the Milky Way,
Drinking dew and supping on carnelian branches.
I much pity men in this world,
Who harness their horses early, all to race ahead.
In empty stillness I achieve the state of naturalness,
How are glory and honor worth chasing?

II

The little quail stakes a claim to artemesia shrubs,[3]
It looks up to laugh at how the divine phoenix flies.
A caved-in well serves as the dwelling for the mayfly and frog,[4]
The divine tortoise—where does he return to?
I regret my clumsiness in the way I conduct myself in the world,
I have much and long thought of following my intent.
Removed from reality, cut off from the world,
I do not aspire to be praised for abiding by convention.

---

low-flying quail with that of the high-soaring fabulous *peng*-bird, referenced in line 2 of this poem as the phoenix.

4 An allusion to a story in *Zhuangzi*, which contrasts the circumscribed view of the frog in the well against the boundless view of the great tortoise who resides in the vast Eastern Sea.

往事既已謬
來者猶可追
何為人事間
自令心不夷
慷慨思古人
夢想見容輝
願與知己遇
舒憤啟幽微
巖穴多隱逸
輕舉求吾師
晨登箕山巔
日夕不知饑
玄居養營魄
千載長自綏

遊仙詩

遙望山上松
隆谷鬱青葱
自遇一何高
獨立迥無雙

If what is past is already an error done,
Then what is to come can still be pursued.
Why should one let affairs of the world,
Make one's heart uncalmed?
With impassioned indignation, I think of the ancients;
In my dreams, I see their radiant countenance.
I long to meet someone who will understand me,
So I may express my frustrations, open up my hidden subtleties.
Cliffs and caves have many recluses,
Lightly I take off in search of my teacher.[1]
At daybreak, I ascend to the top of Mount Ji;[2]
As the sun sets, I am not aware of any hunger.[3]
Living in seclusion, I nurture my soul
So that for a thousand years I shall long be at peace.

[Dai Mingyang, ed., *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu*, 37–38]

Roaming with Immortals

Gazing afar to the pines on top of the mountains,
In the lofty valleys, they are lush and verdant.
Where they are found, how high it is!
They stand alone, without any peer into the distance.

1 Xi Kang elsewhere refers to Laozi and Zhuangzi as his teachers.

2 Home to the legendary recluse Xu You 許由, who indignantly declined the throne to the kingdom when offered by sage-king Yao.

3 Transcending material needs is a power associated with immortals.

顧想遊其下
蹊路絕不通
王喬弃我去
乘雲駕六龍
飄颻戲玄圃
黄老路相逢
授我自然道
曠若發童蒙
採藥鍾山隅
服食改姿容
蟬蛻棄穢累
結友家板桐
臨觴奏九韶
雅歌何邕邕
長與俗人別
誰能覩其蹤

I wish to ramble beneath them,
But the path is cut-off—I cannot get through.
Wang Qiao lifts me up and takes me away;[1]
We ride the clouds, charioting six dragons.
Floating and fluttering, we sport in the Garden of Mystery;[2]
Along the road, we meet Huang and Lao.[3]
They teach me the Way of the Natural,[4]
All becomes clear like a childlike simplicity burgeoning forth.
We pick herbs in a nook on Mount Zhong,[5]
And we ingest elixirs, which transform our appearance.
As cicadas shed their shells, casting away filth and entanglements,
I become friends with the immortals, and settle on Bantong.[6]
Before our goblets, we play the "Nine Shao,"[7]
These elegant songs—how harmonious!
I shall forever part from common men,
For who will be able to spot our tracks?

[Dai Mingyang, ed., *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu*, 39–40]

1 An ancient immortal.
2 A place on top of the Kunlun Mountains where immortals were said to reside.
3 Huang, or the Yellow Emperor, and Laozi are revered founding figures in Daoism.
4 A reference to teachings of the Dao, a philosophy that prizes naturalness.
5 Another name for the Kunlun Mountains.
6 Part of the Kunlun Mountains; see fn. 2 above.
7 Music of sage-king Shun.

六言詩十首

I

惟上古堯舜

二人功德齊均
不以天下私親
高尚簡樸慈順
寧濟四海蒸民

II

唐虞世道治

萬國穆親無事
賢愚各自得志
晏然逸豫內忘
佳哉爾時可喜

III

智慧用有為

法令滋章寇生
紛然相召不停
大人玄寂無聲
鎮之以靜自正

Hexasyllabic Verse, Ten Poems

I
Yao and Shun of high antiquity:[1]

The two were equal in deed and virtue,
Neither favored his own kin by ceding them the realm.
Lofty, modest, and beneficent they were,
Bringing peace and succor to the people within the four seas.

II
Tang Yao and Yu Shun governed the world with the Way:

The myriad states, in harmony and alliance, had no strife;
The worthy and foolish each attained its own ambition.
To live in ease and contentment, forgetting all matters—
How fine! That was a time one could rejoice in.

III
When intelligence and wisdom are used, falsehoods occur:

When laws and ordinances proliferate and become manifest, thievery arises;
In this profusion and confusion, mutual responses are without end.
The Great Man is obscure and still, making no sounds;
He pacifies the world with calm, and it governs itself.

---

1 Two sage-kings of high antiquity.

IV

名與身孰親

哀哉世俗殉榮
馳騖竭力喪精
得失相紛憂驚
自貪勤苦不寧

V

生生厚招咎

金玉滿堂莫守
古人安此麤醜
獨以道德為友
故能延期不朽

VI

名行顯患滋

位高勢重禍基
美色伐性不疑
厚味腊毒難治
如何貪人不思

IV
Reputation or one's person, which is dear?

Alas! The vulgar men of the world die for glory;
Hurrying about saps one's energy, drains one's spiritual essence.
When gain and loss intertwine, grief and fright result;
4 Cupidity and toil lead to no peace.

V
Too much emphasis on life beckons trouble:[1]

A hall filled with gold and jade cannot be safeguarded,
Hence the ancients were content with the simple and coarse.
They only had the way and virtue as friends,
4 Thus they could extend their lives and not decay.

VI
When one's reputation and conduct are prominent, calamities proliferate:

High place, great power are the bases for trouble,
Just as female beauty cuts one's vitality, without a doubt.
Strong flavors are extremely toxic, hard to cure—
4 Why do the covetous not think of this?

1 In the philosophy of Laozi, placing too much emphasis on preserving one's livelihood will lead to death.

VII

東方朔至清

外似貪污內貞
穢身滑稽隱名
不為世累所攖
所以知足無營

VIII

楚子文善仕

三為令尹不喜
柳下降身蒙恥
不以爵祿為己
靖恭古惟二子

IX

老萊妻賢明

不願夫子相荊
相將避祿隱耕
樂道閒居採萍
終厲高節不傾

VII
Dongfang Shuo was of utmost purity:[1]

By appearance, he seemed greedy and foul, but was upright inside;
He dirtied himself and played the jester, but had fame as a recluse.
He was not entangled by the trammels of the world,
Hence he understood sufficiency and sought nothing.

VIII
Ziwen of Chu excelled at being an official:[2]

When Ziwen was thrice made prime minister, he showed no pleasure;
When Liuxia Hui was demoted, he suffered no shame.[3]
Neither sought rank and salary for themselves;
In fulfilling their duties, there were but these two masters in antiquity.

IX
The wife of Lao Lai was worthy and clear-minded:[4]

She did not wish for her husband to serve as minister of Jing [Chu],
So they followed one another, avoided salary and plowed in reclusion.
They delighted in the Way, living in leisure, plucking duckweed,
Honing their lofty integrity until the end, never swerving from it.

1 Dongfang Shuo was an adviser to the Han Emperor Wu 漢武帝.

2 When Ziwen was made prime minister of Chu three times, he showed no pleasure; similarly, when he was removed from office three times, he showed no displeasure.

3 Liuxia Hui was thrice removed from office yet did not quit his state after any of his dismissals.

4 The wife of Lao Lai persuaded her husband to decline a summons from the king of Chu and to remain instead in reclusion.

X

嗟古賢原憲

棄背膏粱朱顏
樂此屢空飢寒
形陋體逸心寬
得志一世無患

重作四言詩七首

I

富貴尊榮
憂患諒獨多
富貴尊榮
憂患諒獨多
古人所懼
豐屋蔀家
人害其上
獸惡網羅
惟有貧賤
可以無他
歌以言之
富貴憂患多

X
Ah! The ancient worthy, Yuan Xian:[1]

He cast aside rich food and rosy cheeks,[2]
Finding delight in empty basket, hunger, and cold.
His appearance was unrefined, his body free and mind unfettered,
So he fulfilled his intent, without a worry in the world.

[Dai Mingyang, ed., *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu*, 40–45]

Recomposing Tetrasyllabic Verse, Seven Poems (also titled "Imitations of the Song of Qiu Hu" 代秋胡歌 or "Ballad of Qiu Hu" 秋胡行)

I

With riches, rank and honor,
Griefs and worries are particularly many.
With riches, rank and honor,
Griefs and worries are particularly many.
That which the ancients feared were
A house stocked with riches and a home covered in abundance.[3]
People resent those above them,
As animals despise snares and nets.
Only in poverty and low station
Could there be no harm.
I make a song to express this:
Riches and rank bring much grief and worry.

1 A disciple of Confucius who was unperturbed by poverty but considered not putting one's learning into practice a true cause of distress.
2 "Rosy cheeks" is a synecdoche for beautiful women.
3 This is probably because a rich home could invite trouble.

II

貧賤易居
貴盛難為工
貧賤易居
貴盛難為工
恥佞直言
與禍相逢
變故萬端
俾吉作凶
思牽黃犬
其計莫從
歌以言之
貴盛難為工

III

勞謙寡悔
忠信可久安
勞謙寡悔
忠信可久安

II

In poverty and low station, one lives in ease;
With rank and prosperity, it is hard to come to good.
In poverty and low station, one lives in ease;
With rank and prosperity, it is hard to come to good.
If you find shame in flattery and choose straight talk,
You'll meet with misfortune.
Accidents are multifarious,
Causing good fortune to turn into ill.
He longed to lead his yellow dog,
But his plan was not realized.[1]
I make a song to express this:
With rank and prosperity, it is hard to come to good.

III

Diligent about his modesty, he receives little blame;[2]
Loyalty and trustworthiness bring about lasting peace.
Diligent about his modesty, he receives little blame;
Loyalty and trustworthiness bring about lasting peace.

---

1 When the Qin minister Li Si 李斯 was about to be executed, he lamented to his son that he could not take once again their yellow dog out to chase wily rabbits. Li Si is an example of how even the most successful and calculating of ministers can come to a bad end.

2 This line refers to how modesty can lead to good fortune through a statement in the *Classic of Changes*.

天道害盈
好勝者殘
彊梁致災
多事招患
欲得安樂
獨有無慾
歌以言之
忠信可久安

IV

役神者弊
極欲令人枯
役神者弊
極欲令人枯
顏回短折
不及童烏
縱體淫恣
莫不早徂
酒色何物
今自不辜
歌以言之
酒色令人枯

The way of heaven is to harm what is full:[1]
The ambitious ones always suffer injury,
The aggressive will end in calamity,
And the meddling will invite disaster.
If one wants peace and happiness,
Then it is only by making no faults.
I make a song to express this:
Loyalty and trustworthiness bring about lasting peace.

IV

Toiling one's spirit leads to harm;
Indulging in one's desires to the utmost makes one decay.
Toiling one's spirit leads to harm;
Indulging in one's desires to the utmost makes one decay.
Yan Hui, who died young in his short life,
Did not match Tongwu in brevity of years.[2]
Those who abandon their bodies to dissipation,
None will not depart early.
Wine and women—what are they?
Today I am guilty of neither.
I make a song to express this:
Wine and women make one decay.

1 A reference to the pattern ascribed to the Way of Heaven in the *Classis of Changes*, whereby what is full must wane and what is depleted will increase.

2 Tongwu was the precocious son of the Han dynasty scholar official Yang Xiong 揚雄. He is believed to have died at an even earlier age than Confucius's favorite disciple, Yan Hui. Both are cast here as examples of the harm done by wearying out one's spirit.

V

絕智棄學
遊心於玄默
絕智棄學
遊心於玄默
遇過而悔
當不自得
垂釣一壑
所樂一國
被髮行歌
和氣四塞
歌以言之
遊心於玄默

1 Drawing from a similar injunction in *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, this line prescribes simplicity, for wisdom and learning complicate matters and ultimately bring more harm than benefit.

2 The Dao (or Mystery) is often described as silent.

3 The conjunction *er* has been emended to a negative *fu* in my translation. See Additional Notes.

V

Repudiate wisdom, discard learning,[1]
Let your mind roam in the dark silence of the Mystery.[2]
Repudiate wisdom, discard learning,
Let your mind roam in the dark silence of the Mystery.
When you commit a fault, how should you regret it?[3]
Do something right but don't be self-satisfied.[4]
He cast his fish-hook in a gully,
That which pleased him was merely one domain.[5]
With loosened hair, he sang as he strolled,[6]
And a harmonious vapor filled within the four borders.[7]
I make a song to express this:
Let your mind roam in the dark silence of the Mystery.

4 A reference to the ideal man in *Zhuangzi*, who possesses such perfect equanimity that neither committing error nor doing right could burden him.

5 Alludes to a description of Zhuangzi in the *History of Han*, in which the philosopher is portrayed as leading a life of detachment and simplicity, with few desires.

6 Alludes to a description of Laozi in *Zhuangzi*, in which his loosened hair suggests an otherworldliness.

7 "Harmonious vapor" refers to the primal harmony of all things through a fusion of yin and yang forces.

VI

思與王喬
乘雲遊八極
思與王喬
乘雲遊八極
淩厲五岳
忽行萬億
授我神藥
自生羽翼
呼吸太和
鍊形易色
歌以言之
思行遊八極

VII

徘徊鍾山
息駕於層城
徘徊鍾山
息駕於層城

VI

I long with Wang Qiao[1]
To ride the clouds and roam the Eight Extremes.
I long with Wang Qiao
To ride the clouds and roam the Eight Extremes.
Swiftly we traverse the Five Marchmounts,[2]
And speedily travel a myriad leagues.
He'd bestow divine drugs upon me,[3]
To make me grow feathered wings.
I breathe in the air of Primal Harmony,
Which smelts my form and changes my countenance.
I make a song to express this:
I long to travel to and roam the Eight Extremes.

VII

I linger about on Mount Zhong,[4]
And rest my cart in the layered city.[5]
I linger about on Mount Zhong,
And rest my cart in the layered city.

1 An ancient immortal.

2 Five sacred mountains that defined ancient Chinese territory, with one for each cardinal direction and one at the center.

3 Immortality drugs.

4 Another name for Kunlun Mountains, a divine mountain range.

5 The layered city refers to the highest part of the Kunlun Mountains. It is sometimes referred to as "heavenly court," home to the heavenly emperor.

上蔭華蓋
下采若英
受道王母
遂升紫庭
逍遙天衢
千載長生
歌以言之
徘徊於層城

思親詩

奈何愁兮愁無聊
恆惻惻兮心若抽
愁奈何兮悲思多
情鬱結兮不可化
奄失恃兮孤煢煢
內自悼兮啼失聲
思報德兮邈已絕
感鞠育兮情剝裂
嗟母兄兮永潛藏
想形容兮內摧傷
感陽春兮思慈親
欲一見兮路無因

Above, the resplendent canopy shades;[1]
Below, I pluck the blossoms of spiderwort.
I receive the way from the Queen Mother,[2]
Then I ascend to the Purple Court.
Wandering freely in the Heavenly Thoroughfare,
I enjoy longevity that will last a thousand years.
I make a song to express this:
Linger about in the layered city.

[Dai Mingyang, ed., *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu*, 45–52]

This poem was written to mourn the loss of the poet's mother and an elder brother, about whom little is known.

Thinking of My Loved Ones

What can be done about this grief, a grief without relief?
Constantly in pang and pain, my heart is as though torn asunder.
This grief—what can be done? Sorrowful thoughts are legion:
Feelings stifled and knotted cannot be dispelled.
Suddenly I lost those I relied on, now by myself, alone and unaided;
Inside I mourn to myself, sobbing so hard no sounds come out.
I think to repay their kindness, but they are far away, already gone;
Moved by their nurturing care, my feelings sundered.
Alas! My mother and brother—forever concealed and buried;
When I remember their faces, my insides are crushed in agony.
Moved by the warm spring sun, I think of those kind loved ones;
I wish to see them once more, but there is no road to follow.

---

1 The resplendent canopy is a synecdoche for the imperial carriage as well as the name of a constellation. Xi Kang is describing the heavenly court: layered city, imperial canopy, Queen, Purple Court, and Heavenly Thoroughfare (i.e. the sky).

2 An ancient Chinese goddess who was said to reside in the Kunlun Mountains in the west and dispensed secret prescriptions for immortality.

望南山兮發哀歎
感机杖兮涕汍瀾
念疇昔兮母兄在
心逸豫兮壽四海
忽已逝兮不可追
心窮約兮但有悲
上空堂兮廓無依
覩遺物兮心崩摧
中夜悲兮當告誰
獨抆淚兮抱哀戚
日遠邁兮思予心
戀所生兮淚不禁
慈母沒兮誰予驕
顧自憐兮心忉忉
訴蒼天兮天不聞
淚如雨兮歎成雲
欲棄憂兮尋復來
痛殷殷兮不可裁

Gazing at the Southern Mountain, I heave a sorrowful sigh;[1]
Moved by the sight of their armrests and canes, my tears stream down profusely.[2]
I think of former days, when my mother and brother were still here,
My heart content and untroubled, with the four seas as my companion.[3]
Suddenly they are gone and cannot be pursued;
My heart is spent, all that is left is sorrow.
I ascend the empty hall, deserted, with no one to depend upon;
I look at the things they left behind, and my heart is crushed and crumbled.
In the middle of the night, grief overtakes me—who can I tell?
Alone I wipe away my tears and clasp my pain.
With each day, they move farther away, yet I think of them in my heart;
I long for she who gave birth to me, I weep, unable to restrain myself.
My kind mother has passed, who will indulge me now?
Looking at my self-pity, my heart is dismayed and disconsolate.
I cry to the azure heaven, but heaven does not hear me;
With tears like rain, my sighs become clouds.
I want to dispel my sorrow, yet it comes right back;
My pain is ardent and agonizing, and it cannot be cut off.

[Dai Mingyang, ed., *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu*, 53–55]

1 Southern Mountain is a symbol of longevity based on a line in the *Classic of Poetry*, but the sight of it brings to the poet a sad reminder of the permanence of his loss of his mother and brother.

2 Objects used by the elderly, presumably here his mother and brother, for support.

3 I am reading *shou* (long-lasting) as *chou* (companion), a character often used interchangeably with *shou* in old texts. See Additional Notes.

答二郭詩三首

I

天下悠悠者
下京趨上京
二郭懷不群
超然來北征
樂道託萊廬
雅志無所營
良時遘其願
遂結歡愛情
君子義是親
恩好篤平生
寡智自生災
屢使眾釁成
豫子匿梁側
聶政變其形
顧此懷怛惕
慮在苟自寧

The following three response poems were written to Guo Xiazhou and Guo Xiashu, who were likely brothers. At the time, Xi Kang was forced to flee his residence, possibly in the aftermath of Guanqiu Jian's failed rebellion against the Sima regime, an effort Xi Kang contemplated supporting.

A Response to the Two Guos, Three Poems

I

The common herd spread across this empire,
When they live outside the capital all want to scurry to it.
What the Two Guos harbor inside is unlike the crowd;
Transcending the rest, they travelled north.
Delighting in the Way, they entrust themselves to the grass hut;
Having an upright intent, they seek after nothing.
At a fine time, our wishes were met,
And we formed feelings of affection.
The gentleman deems this affinity right and proper,
Hence our mutual fondness shall remain steady in our lives.
My meager intelligence gives rise to calamity,
And often creates much rift.
Master Yu hid beside the bridge;[1]
Nie Zheng altered his appearance.[2]
Considering this, I harbor worry and fear:
My concern is how I may procure serenity.

---

1 Yu Rang attempted multiple times to assassinate the lord who killed his liege, who had appreciated his worth.

2 Nie Zheng was an assassin from the Warring States Period who disfigured himself and committed suicide after he killed his target. Xi Kang is suggesting that those he offended may hire assassins to harm him.

今當寄他域
嚴駕不得停
本圖終宴婉
20 今更不克并
二子贈嘉詩
馥如幽蘭馨
戀土思所親
24 能不氣憤盈

II

昔蒙父兄祚
少得離負荷
因疏遂成懶
4 寢跡北山阿
但願養性命
終己靡有他
良辰不我期
8 當年值紛華
坎凜趣世教
常恐嬰網羅
羲農邈已遠
12 拊膺獨咨嗟

Now I shall consign myself to a foreign region,
So I prepare my carriage and will not stop.
My original plan was to enjoy our amity until the end,
But now that's changed, and we can no longer be together.
You two, sirs, presented me with fine poems,
Whose savor is like the fragrance of hidden thoroughwort.
I shall yearn for my land, think of those dear to me—
Can I help but feel fervor to the brim?

II

Formerly I received the blessing of my father and brother;
In my youth I was kept from shouldering burdens.
Due to my lax upbringing, I became lazy,
And concealed my tracks in the bends on the northern mountain.
I only wish to nurture my life:[1]
To the end of my life, there is no other desire.
A good era is not what I encountered,
For in my prime, I met an efflorescence of chaos.
Afflicted and frustrated, I followed orthodox teachings;
Constantly I feared getting entangled in nets.
Since Fu Xi and Shennong are so remote and long gone,[2]
I beat my breast and alone heave a sigh.

1 An allusion to the third chapter of *Zhuangzi*, "The Essentials for Nurturing Life." How to nurture (and care for) life was a main and persistent concern for Xi Kang, who devoted two essays to this topic.

2 Fu Xi and Shennong (Divine Farmer) were legendary rulers in high antiquity, whose era represents primitive goodness and simple rule.

朔戒貴尚容
漁父好揚波
雖逸亦已難
非余心所嘉
豈若翔區外
餐瓊漱朝霞
遺物棄鄙累
逍遙遊太和
結友集靈嶽
彈琴登清歌
有能從我者
古人何足多

III

詳觀凌世務
屯險多憂虞
施報更相市
大道匿不舒
夷路值枳棘
安步將焉如
權智相傾奪
名位不可居

Dongfang Shuo admonished his son to esteem self-preservation;[1]
The old fisherman was fond of beating up the waves.[2]
Such may be detached ease, but it would indeed be hard for me,
Since it is not what my heart likes.
How can it compare with soaring beyond the realm,
Supping on carnelian, rinsing your mouth with morning clouds?
Or leaving behind mundane things and abandoning vulgar toils,
To wander free and easy in the Primal Harmony?
Friends I've made I shall gather on the numinous peak;
I pluck my zither and raise a lone song.
As long as there are those who can follow me,
How would the ancients be worth praising?

III

Looking closely at the disarray of the world's affairs,
Piles of danger, there is much grief and fright.
Bestowal and recompense exchange as in a marketplace;
The Great Way is concealed and will not unfold.
When even along a leveled road, one meets thorns and brambles;
For a comfortable stroll, where is one to go?
The tactical and strategic vie with one another;
Fame and position cannot be maintained.

1 Dongfang Shuo 東方朔, a resourceful and flexible courtier, served as jester and adviser to the Han Emperor Wu.

2 The old fisherman in the *Lyrics of Chu* told an abject and indignant Qu Yuan 屈原 to "stir up the mud and beat up the waves" when the whole world is muddy, thereby making a case to adapt to changing environments and to navigate life with equanimity.

鸞鳳避罻羅
遠託崑崙墟
莊周悼靈龜
越稷畏王輿
至人存諸己
隱樸樂玄虛
功名何足殉
乃欲列簡書
所好亮若茲
楊氏歎交衢
去去從所志
敢謝道不俱

1 Zhuangzi once declined a summons from the king of Chu by indicating that he would rather be alive and free, dragging his tail in the mud, than be wrapped, boxed, and stored in reverence like the divine tortoise enshrined after its death.

2 After the men of Yue thrice assassinated their ruler, Prince Sou (reading *sou* for *ji*), fearing for his life, fled from the throne and hid in a cave.

3 In *Zhuangzi*, Confucius tells Yan Hui that "the Perfected Man first had it (i.e. the Dao) in himself before trying to give it to others."

The simurgh avoids the ensnaring net,
Consigning itself afar to a mound on Kunlun.
Zhuang Zhou mourned the numinous tortoise;[1]
Prince Sou of Yue feared the royal palanquin.[2]
The Perfected Man first has it in himself,[3]
Leaning on the uncarved block, delighting in the mysterious void.[4]
How are deeds and fame worth dying for?
Just so that one's name is listed in bamboo volumes?
What I fancy is really like this,
Mister Yang sighed over the forks in the thoroughfare.[5]
I am leaving, leaving! I shall pursue my own will—
I dare say that my way is not the same as yours.[6]

[Dai Mingyang, ed., *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu*, 61–65]

4 The uncarved block represents an original wholeness that is the Dao.

5 In *Liezi*, Yang Zhu 楊朱 reckons with the fact that there are many different ends to which the same learning may be applied and many different understandings of the same teaching. Xi Kang is arguing that one must therefore return to the unwrought and original state that is the Dao.

6 Xi Kang champions a higher kind of transcendence than mere self-preservation and bidding one's time, which seem to be Guo Xiazhou's advice in his poems to Xi Kang.

與阮德如詩

含哀還舊廬
感切傷心肝
良時邁吾子
談慰臭如蘭
疇昔恨不早
既面侔舊歡
不悟卒永離
念隔增憂歎
事故無不有
別易會良難
郢人忽已逝
匠石寢不言
澤雉窮野草
靈龜樂泥蟠

1 Alluding to a passage in the *Classic of Changes*, "scent like thoroughwort" describes the words of those who share one mind and heart.

2 On the man from Ying and Carpenter Shi, see p. 283 fn. 3.

3 On the marsh pheasant, see p. 288 fn. 2.

This poem was written to a friend reputed to be a man of outstanding talent, skilled in Names and Principles, which required mastery of logic, differentiation, and argumentation. Xi Kang and his friend shared an interest in discourse and they elsewhere debated whether one's residence in life and death has any bearing on one's good or bad fortune. This poem was composed on the occasion of Ruan Deru's departure, presumably to assume an official post.

A Poem to Ruan Deru

Holding in my sorrow, I return to my old hut,
With feelings so acute they wound my heart and liver.
On a fine occasion, you and I met;
Our sympathetic conversations—their scent was like thoroughwort.[1]
Of bygone days, I regret that we did not meet earlier,
For as soon as we met, we were like old friends.
I did not know that in the end we would be forever parted;
When I think of our separation, it increases my woeful sighs.
Unforeseen events can always happen,
And while parting is easy, reunion is truly difficult.
The man from Ying is suddenly gone already,
So Carpenter Shi rests and speaks no more.[2]
The marsh pheasant travels to the limits of grassy wilderness;[3]
The numinous tortoise delights in coiling in the mud.[4]

4 The numinous tortoise has come to symbolize naturalness and freedom through a story in *Zhuangzi*, in which the philosopher once declined a summons from the king of Chu by indicating that he would rather be alive and free, dragging his tail in the mud, than wrapped, boxed, and stored in reverence like the divine tortoise enshrined after its death.

榮名穢人身
高位多災患
未若捐外累
肆志養浩然
顏氏希有虞
隰子慕黃軒
涓彭獨何人
唯志在所安
漸漬殉近欲
一往不可攀
生生在豫積
勿以怵自寬
南土旱不涼
衿計宜早完
君其愛德素
行路慎風寒
自力致所懷
臨文情辛酸

1 Refers to the vast, flood-like vital breath that Mencius encouraged cultivating, with an implication of an unlimited capacity for moral virtue.

2 Mister Yan refers to Yan Hui, Confucius's favorite disciple. Yu refers to sage-king Shun.

3 Xi Peng 隰朋 was an official of the Spring and Autumn Period. In a passage in *Zhuangzi*, Guan Zhong is recorded describing him as someone worthy to succeed him as chief adviser to Duke Huan of Qi 齊桓公.

Glory and fame defile one's person,
While high rank brings much calamity and suffering.
Better to cast aside outer entanglements,
Give free rein to one's will and nurture the flood-like vitality.[1]
Mister Yan aspired to be like Yu;[2]
Master Xi esteemed the Yellow Emperor.[3]
Juan and Peng—who were these men?[4]
They only strove to satisfy their will.
When steeped in this world, one pursues immediate desires,
Yet once life is gone, it cannot be held onto.
The way to cultivate life lies in accumulating ease,
Yet do not be lured by self-gratification.
The Southern lands are stifling hot, not cool;
In fashioning plans, it is best to finish early.[5]
May you cherish your innate moral character;
As you travel the roads, be careful of wind and chill.
I have tried my hardest to convey my thoughts to you;
Sitting down to write, my feelings were bitter and sour.

[Dai Mingyang, ed., *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu*, 66–68]

---

4 Master Juan was reputed to be a transcendent who lived over three hundred years; Ancestor Peng was said to have lived over eight hundred years.

5 The Southern lands could refer either to Ruan Deru's destination or to his location at the time, in which case, he may be traveling north where he would need a supply of winter clothing. "Fashioning plans" might refer to the preparation of winter clothing, which is best made before the season turns cool.

酒會詩

樂哉苑中遊
周覽無窮已
百卉吐芳華
崇基邈高跱
林木紛交錯
玄池戲魴鯉
輕丸斃翔禽
纖綸出鱣鮪
坐中發美讚
異氣同音軌
臨川獻清酤
微歌發皓齒
素琴揮雅操
清聲隨風起
斯會豈不樂
恨無東野子
酒中念幽人
守故彌終始
但當體七絃
寄心在知己

A Poem Composed for a Wine Drinking Gathering

How joyous is this outing in the park!
Looking all around, there is no limit to the vista.
Myriad plants spew forth fragrant blossoms,
While towering mountains in the distance stand aloft.
The woods spread in crisscross fashion;
In the dark pond sport bream and carp.
Light pellets bring down soaring birds,
While silken fishing line draws out sturgeon.
Those present all cheer in rapture,
Even those of different temperaments express the same delight.
Looking down upon the stream, we offer up a clear wine;[1]
From pearly teeth, a soft song flows.
On a plain zither, a refined tune is played;
Clear sounds rise along with the wind.
This gathering—how can it not be joyous?
I regret that the man of Eastern Moor is not here.[2]
In the midst of drinking, I think of the secluded one;[3]
Remembering the old is constantly with me from beginning to end.
Let me express myself with these seven strings,[4]
Entrusting my feelings to the friend who will understand me.

[Dai Mingyang, ed., *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu*, 72–73; Lu Xun, ed., *Xi Kang ji*, 29]

1 The reference is to wine fermented for only one night.

2 A reference to Ruan Deru, who temporarily lodged at the Eastern Moor for reasons we do not know.

3 The “secluded one” seems to refer to Ruan Deru, though it also designates the recluse in general.

4 Of the zither.

四言詩十一首

I

淡淡流水
淪胥而逝
汎汎柏舟
載浮載滯
微嘯清風
鼓檝容裔
放櫂投竿
優游卒歲

II

婉彼鴛鴦
戢翼而遊
俯唼綠藻
託身洪流
朝翔素瀨
夕棲靈洲
搖蕩清波
與之沈浮

Tetrasyllabic Verse, Eleven Poems

I

Smooth and full is the rolling water,
Link after link it flows on.
Tossed, tossed is the cypress boat,
Now drifting, now still.
I whistle softly in the pure breeze
And drum my oar, wavering and havering.
I set aside the paddle and cast my fishing pole
To spend all my days in carefree leisure!

II

Graceful are those mandarin ducks
That fold their wings and sport around.
Bowing their heads, they chew on green pondweed,
Entrusting themselves to the vast current.
At dawn, they glide over the white rapids;
At dusk, they perch on the numinous isle.
Rocking and swaying with the clear billows,
They rise and sink with them.

III

藻氾蘭沚
和聲激朗
操縵清商
遊心大象
傾昧修身
惠音遺響
鍾期不存
我志誰賞

IV

斂絃散思
遊釣九淵
重流千仞
或餌者懸
猗與莊老
棲遲永年
寔惟龍化
蕩志浩然

1 An ancient musical mode possibly with an extremely short and quick rhythm as well as a soft sound.

2 The Great Image refers to the Dao, which is frequently described as having no form.

III

By the pondweed shore, on the thoroughwort islet,
A harmony of sounds, ardent and crisp.
I stroke my zither and pluck the Pure Shang mode,[1]
My mind roams the Great Image.[2]
Inclined to dimness, I nurture my body,[3]
Fine tunes leave lingering sounds.
Since Zhong Ziqi is no more,[4]
Who will appreciate my intent?

IV

I lay aside my zither and let loose my thoughts;
As I roam, I cast my hook in the nine-layered depths.
In an abysmal pool of a thousand fathoms,
Misled by a lure, a fish dangles on a hook.
Ah! Zhuangzi and Laozi,[5]
Who perched and rested throughout their long lives.
Truly with the transformations of a dragon,[6]
May I let my intent roam into the Unimpeded.

---

3 "Dimness" signifies both concealment and a form of ignorance prized in Daoist philosophy.

4 The archetype of an understanding friend.

5 Figures revered as founding fathers of early Daoist philosophy.

6 Laozi has been described as a dragon that coils to form a definite shape and stretches out to display its patterns.

V

肅肅泠風
分生江湄
卻背華林
俯泝丹坻
含陽吐英
履霜不衰
嗟我殊觀
百卉具腓
心之憂矣
孰識玄機

VI

猗猗蘭藹
殖彼中原
綠葉幽茂
麗藻豐繁
馥馥蕙芳
順風而宣
將御椒房
吐薰龍軒
瞻彼秋草
悵矣惟騫

V

Sough, sough sounds the gentle breeze,
Plants grow scattered on the riverbank.
Set against a forest in bloom,
They look down upon a crimson isle.
They hold sunlight and spew forth flowers,
They endure frost and wither not.
Ah! How I behold a different prospect,
Now that the myriad plants and grasses have wilted.
The sorrow in my heart—
Who understands the workings of the mysterious?

VI

Lush, lush the efflorescence of thoroughwort,
Which grows in the central plains.
Green leaves dense and profuse,
Resplendent in their bounty.
Sweet, sweet the scent of melilotus:
It drifts with the wind and disseminates.
They are presented to fagara-scented royal chambers,[1]
And spew fragrance from the dragon carriage.
Look at those autumn grasses,
I lament for their loss.[2]

1 For its scent, the pepper plant fagara was sometimes mixed into the mud that covered the walls of royal consorts' chambers.

2 Thoroughwort and melilotus are fragrant plants that signify virtue through their usage in the *Lyrics of Chu*. The message here seems to be that they flourish when growing in the open plains; but they suffer when transplanted to the court, notwithstanding their privileged status as prized olfactory ornaments.

VII

泆泆白雲
順風而回
淵淵綠水
盈坎而頹
乘流遠逝
自躬蘭隈
杖策答諸
納之素懷
長嘯清原
惟以告哀

VIII

抄抄翔鸞
舒翼太清
俯眺紫辰
仰看素庭
淩躡玄虛
浮沉無形
將遊區外
嘯侶長鳴
神□不存
誰與獨征

VII

Floating, floating the white clouds,
Moving with the wind and returning.
Deep, deep the green water,
Filling the sink-hole, flowing downwards.
Riding the current, my boat travels far;
I rest my body at the thoroughwort bend.
With a staff in hand, I reply to it,[1]
Taking in these things as part of my constant thoughts.
I whistle long across the silent plain,
Just to declare my sorrow.

VIII

High and far soars the simurgh,
Spreading its wings across the Great Purity.
Looking down, it espies the purple constellations;
Looking up, it sees the white hall.[2]
It traverses into the dark emptiness,[3]
And drifts along with formlessness.
About to roam beyond the realm,
It calls to its mate in a long cry.
Spirit […] is no more,[4]
Who will accompany me on my solitary journey?

1 Unspecified in the original, "it" likely refers to nature. Whistling was a way to commune with nature.

2 A reference to the white sky.

3 A reference to the Dao.

4 The second character in this line is missing.

IX

有舟浮覆
紼纚是維
桰檝松櫂
有若龍微
□津經險
越濟不歸
思友長林
抱樸山嵋
守器殉業
不能奮飛

X

羽化華岳
超遊清霄
雲蓋習習
六龍飄飄
左佩椒桂
右綴蘭苕
淩陽讚路
王子奉軺

IX

A boat bobbing and drifting,
To a tow-line it is tied.
With cypress oar and pine scull,
The boat moves subtly like the dragon.
It […] a ford, traverses a pass,[1]
Ferrying across, never returning.
I long to befriend the tall woods
And embrace simplicity in the hills and on the riverbanks.
By keeping to the implements and pursuing meritorious deeds,[2]
One cannot rush up and fly away.

X

I transform into a winged immortal and ascend the western marchmount,
Roaming in the pure empyrean.
The canopy of clouds drifts and drifts,
While the Six Dragons soar and soar.
On the left, I am adorned by fagara and cinnamon;
On the right, embellished with thoroughwort and rush.
Lingyang guides the way ahead,
While Wangzi attends my light carriage.[3]

1 The first character in this line is missing.
2 Based on a passage in *Zhuangzi*, this refers to implements of statecraft.
3 Two ancient immortals.

婉孌名山
真人是要
齊物養生
與道逍遙

XI

微風清扇
雲氣四除
皎皎亮月
麗於高隅
興命公子
攜手同車
龍驥翼翼
揚鑣踟躕
肅肅宵征
造我友廬
光燈吐輝
華幔長舒
鸞觴酌醴
神鼎烹魚
絃超子野
歎過綿駒

This fine, famed mountain
Invites the True Man.[1]
Leveling all things and nurturing life,
I roam free and easy in the Way.[2]

XI

A gentle wind lightly fans,
Cloud vapors in all directions dispel.
Bright, bright is the shining moon,
Tethered to that lofty corner.
Feeling elated, I order the noble son
To take my hand and share my carriage.
The dragon steed swiftly flies,
I pulled on the reins and wavered.
Pressed and hurried I travel by night,
And arrive upon my friend's cottage.
A bright light emits a glow;
A splendid screen is drawn wide open.
Sweet wine pours from a simurgh chalice;
Fish boils in a divine tripod.
The tunes played transcended those of Ziye,[3]
While the songs sung surpassed those of Mian Ju.[4]

---

1 The True Man in Daoist philosophy is the perfected man.

2 The last two lines name three chapters in *Zhuangzi*.

3 Ziye refers to a famous music master named Kuang 曠 who lived during the Spring and Autumn Period.

4 Mian Ju was a famous singer from the state of Qi during the Spring and Autumn Period.

流詠太素
俯讚玄虛
疇克英賢
與爾剖符

五言詩三首

I

人生譬朝露
世變多百羅
苟必有終極
彭聃不足多
仁義澆淳樸
前識喪道華
留弱喪自然
天真難可和

1 Both the Great Unwrought and Dark Emptiness refer to the Dao.

2 Ancestor Peng is the Chinese Methuselah. Lao Dan, or Laozi, was also known for his longevity.

3 In the Daoist narrative of decline, one resorts to benevolence after the loss of virtue (which is itself a sign of the loss of the Dao) and to righteousness after the loss of benevolence.

4 "Foreknowledge," or knowing something before others, is used in *Laozi* to

Drifting along, I sing about the Great Unwrought;
Looking down, I praise the Dark Emptiness.[1]
Who can be called an outstanding worthy?
With you I shall split a tally.

[Lu Xun, ed., *Xi Kang ji*, 29–31]

Pentasyllabic Verse, Three Poems

I

Life is like morning dew,
As the world changes, one encounters hundreds of nets.
If there must be an ultimate end,
Even Peng and Dan's years would not be enough.[2]
Benevolence and righteousness dilute the pure uncarved block;[3]
Foreknowledge injures the flower of the Dao.[4]
To remain in a weak position injures naturalness;[5]
Heaven-endowed genuineness is hard to harmonize with the rest.[6]

characterize men of lesser virtue, who are activistic and labor over worldly matters, but only to achieve an adverse end.

5 Neither strength nor weakness can naturally be a permanent state in the Daoist view.

6 An allusion to a passage in *Zhuangzi*, which distinguishes between the sage and the genuineness he receives from heaven, on the one hand, and the stupid vulgar and their rites, on the other.

郢人審匠石
鍾子識伯牙
真人不屢存
高唱誰當和

II

脩夜家無為
獨步光庭側
仰首看天衢
流光曜八極
撫心悼季世
遙念大道逼
飄飄當路士
悠悠進自棘
得失自己來
榮辱相蠶食
朱紫雖玄黃
太素貴無色
淵淡體至道
色化同消息

1 On the man from Ying and Carpenter Shi, see p. 283 fn. 3.

2 The archetype of a sympathetic friend, Zhong Ziqi could recognize the intent in Bo Ya's zither music. After Zhong Ziqi died, Bo Ya smashed his zither and vowed never to play again, for he realized that there would never be another one who could understand his tune so well as Zhong Ziqi.

The man of Ying appraised Carpenter Shi;[1]
Zhong Ziqi appreciated Bo Ya.[2]
True Men are not often found,
So when I sing loftily, who can join me?

II

On long nights, in stillness and with nothing to do,
I stroll alone along the side of my lit courtyard.
Raising my head, I look at the Heavenly Thoroughfare,
Flowing light illuminates the Eight Extremes.[3]
I clasp my bosom and mourn the end of an epoch;
I think of the distant past, whose Great Way comes to view.
Hurried, hurried are the men in office,
Yet leisurely, leisurely they advance into a thick of brambles.
Gain and loss stem from oneself,
While honor and disgrace nibble away one another.
Crimson and purple may be colorful,[4]
But Great Simplicity is prized for being colorless.[5]
Profound blandness is the embodiment of the Ultimate Way;
In the transformation of color, increase and decrease are the same.

3 I.e. farthest points on earth.
4 Two colors worn by officials of high rank.
5 "Great Simplicity" refers to the uncarved block or the originary Dao, which is often described in negative terms.

III

俗人不可親
松喬是可鄰
何為穢濁間
動搖增垢塵
慷慨之遠遊
整駕俟良辰
輕舉翔區外
濯翼扶桑津
徘徊戲靈岳
彈琴詠泰真
滄水澡五藏
變化忽若神
恆娥進妙藥
毛羽翕光新
一縱發開陽
俯視當路人
哀哉世間人
何足久託身

III

One ought not to become intimate with the vulgar,
Instead take Red Pine and Wang Qiao as one's neighbors.[1]
Why dwell amongst dirt and mire,
Where a shake can pile on filth and dust?
With impassioned fervor, I set out on a distant journey;
I arrange my carriage and await a fine hour.
In a light ascent, I soar beyond the realm
And wash my wings at the ford by Fusang.[2]
To and fro I sported on the numinous marchmount,
Where I pluck my zither and sing of the Primal Pneuma.
In Canglang's waters, I wash my five organs;[3]
I am transformed—suddenly I become like a divinity.
Chang'e offers me marvelous drugs,[4]
And my feathers gather a new brilliance.
With one leap, I set out to the Big Dipper,[5]
Looking down, I watch those men in office.
Alas, in this world of men,
How is it worth consigning my person to for long?

[Lu Xun, ed., *Xi Kang ji*, 31–32]

1 Two legendary immortals.

2 A mythical tree in the east from where the sun ascends at dawn.

3 Canglang's waters is where in the *Lyrics of Chu* the old fisherman told Qu Yuan that he washes different parts of himself according to circumstances: when those waters are clear, he washes his hat strings in them; when they are muddy, he washes his feet in them.

4 Chang'e was the mythical goddess of the moon.

5 Kaiyang refers to the sixth star in the Big Dipper.

琴賦

余少好音聲，長而翫之。以為物有盛衰，而此無變；滋味有猒，而此不勧。可以導養神氣，宣和情志，處窮獨而不悶者，莫近于音聲也。是故復之而不足，則吟詠以肆志；吟詠之不足，則寄言以廣意。然八音之器，歌舞之象，歷世才士，竝為之賦頌。其體制風流，莫不相襲。稱其材 幹，則以危苦為上；賦其聲音，則以悲哀為主；美其感化，則以垂涕為貴。麗則麗矣，然未盡其理也。推其所 由，似元不解音聲，覽其旨趣，亦未達禮樂之情也。衆器之中，琴德最優。故輟敘所懷，以為之賦。其辭曰：

I

惟椅梧之所生兮
託峻嶽之崇岡
披重壤以誕載兮
參辰極而高驤

Rhapsody on the Zither

Since youth, I have been fond of music. As I grew older, I came to appreciate it. I have always thought that all things flourish and decline, yet only music does not change. With all types of flavors, one could grow surfeited; but with music, one never tires of it. It can guide and nurture one's pneuma and vital breath, express and harmonize one's feeling and intent. For living in adversity and solitude yet without feeling melancholy, nothing comes close to the comfort that music offers. Therefore, if playing again an instrument is not sufficient, then one may sing and chant so as to release one's intention. If singing and chanting are not sufficient, then one may entrust to words so as to extend one's thoughts. Men of talent throughout the ages have composed rhapsodies and hymns about the instruments of eight types of sounds and the various forms of song and dance.[1] However, in their form and style, all imitate each another. When they extol the material of an instrument, they regard as superior a lofty and perilous source. When they describe its sounds, they emphasize sorrow and mournfulness. When they praise its power to stir and transform, they value the most the tears that it makes them shed. Those compositions may be beautiful as far as beauty goes, but they do not fully exhaust the principle of the subject. If one were to infer the reason for this, it would seem that these men have never understood music. Looking at the purport of their works, they also have not penetrated the essence of rites and music. Of all musical instruments, the virtue of the zither is the greatest. Thus, to recount my feelings on this, I have composed a rhapsody. Its lyrics read:

I

Where the paulownia grows
Is a place consigned to the precipitous peaks of lofty mountains.
Breaking through layers of soil, it rises tall;
Nearing the Northern Dipper, it reaches towering heights.

1 The different types of sound are made by instruments of eight different materials: metal, stone, silk, bamboo, gourd, earth, hide, and wood.

含天地之醇和兮
吸日月之休光
鬱紛紜以獨茂兮
飛英蕤于昊蒼
夕納景于虞淵兮
旦晞幹于九陽
經千載以待價兮
寂神跱而永康

II

且其山川形勢
則盤紆隱深
確嵬岑嵓
互嶺巉巖
岞崿嶇崟
丹崖嶮巇
青壁萬尋
若乃重巘增起
偃蹇雲覆
邈隆崇以極壯
崛巍巍而特秀
蒸靈液以播雲

It holds in the pure harmony of heaven and earth,
And breathes in the beneficent luminescence of the sun and moon.
Dense and profuse, it stands apart in luxuriance:
Flying blossoms and fronds drift toward the azure sky.
At dusk, it draws in the sunrays from the Pool of Yu;[1]
At dawn, it dries its trunk under the rising sun.[2]
For a thousand years, it waits to have its value discerned;
In silence, it stands in a divine pose, forever hale.

II

As for the terrain of the mountains and rivers there—
Coiling and curving, dim and deep,
Soaring and steep, precarious and cragged,
Dark ridges, precipitous bluffs,
Towering and tall, jagged and jutting,
Crimson cliffs fall sharply downward,
Verdant walls rise ten thousand fathoms high.
Then layered peaks rise one above another,
Surging so high they seem covered by clouds.
From afar, they tower over all in supreme might;
Lofty crests burgeon forth in singular splendor.
They release numinous vapors, scattering the clouds;

1 The legendary place where the sun was said to set.

2 Literally "nine suns," this term names both the sun itself and from where it was said to rise, or edge of the sky.

據神淵而吐溜
爾乃顛波奔突
狂赴爭流
觸巖觝隈
鬱怒彪休
洶涌騰薄
奮沫揚濤
瀄汩澎湃
蜑蟺相糾
放肆大川
濟乎中州
安回徐邁
寂爾長浮
澹乎洋洋
縈抱山丘
詳觀其區土之所產毓
奧宇之所寶殖
珍怪琅玕
瑤瑾翕赩
叢集累積
奐衍于其側
若乃春蘭被其東

From their divine springs, they spew forth flowing water.
Thereupon, upturned waves rush forth,
Raging forward, vying for a place in the torrent,
Charging into crags, crashing into bends,
Bound in rage, filled with fury,
Sweeping and surging, colliding and crashing,
Spurting foam, rousing billows,
Darting and dashing, rumbling and roaring,
Twisting and turning, as in a serpentine coil.
Coursing unbridled, they gush forth into the great rivers,
Delivering succor to the central region.
There whirling serenely, in a slow pace,
The waters quietly flow into the distant vastness,
Pacifically spreading and spreading,
Entwining and embracing the mountains and hills.
Closely observe what grows in this region's soil,
The treasures produced in its most secluded grounds:
Precious and rare stones,
Jade and gem, plenty and abundant,
Clustered and gathered in piles,
Scattered and strewn beside the tree.
Then, vernal thoroughwort covers land to its east,

沙棠殖其西
涓子宅其陽
玉醴涌其前
玄雲蔭其上
翔鸞集其巔
清露潤其膚
惠風流其間
竦肅肅以靜謐
密微微其清閑
夫所以經營其左右者
　固以自然神麗
　而足思願愛樂矣

III

於是遯世之士
榮期綺季之疇
乃相與登飛梁
越幽壑
援瓊枝
陟峻崿
以遊乎其下
周旋永望

Crab-apple trees grow to the west,
Master Juan lives on its southern slope,[1]
A sweet spring bubbles up in front.
Dark clouds shade its top,
Soaring simurghs perch on the summit.
Fresh dew moistens its bark,
A gentle wind flows through it.
It stands solemnly in silent calm
And quietly in tranquil repose.
Men wander and linger about it it for its natural divine beauty, which suffices to arouse adoration and delight.

III

As to gentlemen who have hidden themselves from the world,
Compeers of Rong Qi and Qi Ji:[2]
Together they ascend flying bridges,
Cross dark vales,
Grasp carnelian branches,
Climb lofty cliffs,
So that they may roam beneath the tree.
Gazing around it and into the distance,

1 A legendary recluse who was said to have written a treatise on the zither, entitled "The Heart of the Zither."

2 Rong Qi, or Rongqi Qi, was a recluse known for his zither skills. Qi Ji, or Qili Ji, was one of the Four Whitepates who fled from the chaos at the end of the Qin dynasty to live in the mountains.

邈若淩飛
邪睨崑崙
俯闚海湄
指蒼梧之迢遞
臨迴江之威夷
悟時俗之多累
仰箕山之餘輝
羨斯嶽之弘敞
心慷慨以忘歸
情舒放而遠覽
接軒轅之遺音
慕老童于騩隅
欽泰容之高吟
顧茲梧而興慮
思假物以託心
乃斲孫枝
准量所任
至人攄思
制為雅琴

1 A mountain range with divine associations.

2 Mountain where the legendary sage-king Shun, the inventor of the five-stringed zither, was buried.

3 Where the legendary recluse Xu You, who refused Yao's offer of throne to the kingdom, resided.

The panorama is vast as if seen by birds soaring in flight.
Sideways, they glance at Kunlun,[1]
Below, they espy the shores of the sea.
They point to Cangwu in the remote distance,[2]
And look down on the winding course of circling rivers.
Realizing the manifold burdens of customs of the time,
They look up to the lingering splendor of Mount Ji.[3]
Admiring the expansive broadness of this peak,
Their hearts so filled with feeling that they forget to return.
They give release to their emotions and gaze afar,
And continue the tunes left by Xuanyuan;[4]
They esteem the Old Child in his corner of Mount Gui,[5]
And revere the lofty chants of Tairong.[6]
Viewing this parasol tree stirs their thoughts;
They wish to use it for conveying their intents.
Then they chop off the young branches
And measure a piece to be used;
For these Perfected Men to express their thoughts,
They make it into an Elegant Zither.

---

4 Another name for the legendary Yellow Emperor, to whom some accounts credit the invention of the ancient zither.

5 Son of the legendary emperor Zhuanxu, the Old Child was said have a voice that produced sounds like bells and stone chimes.

6 Music Master to the Yellow Emperor.

IV

乃使離子督墨
匠石奮斤
夔襄薦法
般倕騁神
鎪會裛厠
朗密調均
華繪彫琢
布藻垂文
錯以犀象
籍以翠綠
絃以園客之絲
徽以鍾山之玉
爰有龍鳳之象
古人之形
伯牙揮手
鍾期聽聲
華容灼爚
發采揚明
何其麗也

1 Master Li, or Li Lou 離婁, was a legendary figure famous for his sharp eyes.
2 On Carpenter Shi, see p. 283 fn. 3.
3 Kui was Music Master under sage-king Shun, and Xiang was said to have taught music to Confucius.

IV

Then they have Master Li examine the ink-line,[1]
Carpenter Shi swing the ax,[2]
Kui and Xiang prescribe the rules of production,[3]
Ban and Chui give free rein to their divine skill.[4]
They carve out the center, join the pieces at their rims, fitting them together closely,
And achieve balance in the spacing between joints.
They paint it with five colors, carve and chisel it,
Cover it with ornate designs and patterns,
Inlay it with rhinoceros horn and elephant ivory,
And mark it with azure and green.
Its strings are made of Yuan Ke's silk;[5]
Its studs are made of jade from Mount Zhong;[6]
It has images of dragons and phoenixes
And the forms of the ancients.
Bo Ya waves his hand across it,[7]
While Zhong Qi listens to the sounds.
Its resplendent surface shines and shimmers,
Radiating color, casting off sheen.
How beautiful it is!

4 Ban refers to Lu Ban 魯般, or Gongshu Ban 公輸般, a famous carpenter from the state of Lu. Chui was a famous craftsman during the time of sage-king Yao.

5 A legendary immortal, Yuan Ke, was said to be able to grow silkworms with cocoons as large as jars.

6 Another name for the divine mountain range, Kunlun.

7 On Bo Ya and Zhong Qi, see p. 354 fn. 2.

伶倫比律
田連操張
進御君子
新聲憀亮
何其偉也

V

及其初調
則角羽俱起
宮徵相證
參發竝趣
上下累應
踸踔磥硌
美聲將興
固以和昶而足耽矣
爾乃理正聲
奏妙曲
揚白雪
發清角
紛淋浪以流離

1 Musician sent by the Yellow Emperor to Kunlun to cut bamboo with which he made the twelve panpipes. He was said to have regulated pitches by adjusting the basic accord to the sounds of the phoenix.

2 A famous zither player, who, according to some accounts, taught Bo Ya how to play.

Ling Lun regulates the pitches;[1]
Tian Lian strums and tunes it.[2]
As presented by a Gentleman,
New sounds are clear and crisp.
How magnificent they are!

V

When the zither is first tuned,
The *jue* and *ju* rise together,[3]
The *gong* and *zhi* check one another.[4]
Notes sound in alternation, then progress in unison;
High and low sequentially resound in accord.
At first irregular, then forte,
Beautiful sounds begin to rise;
Its smooth harmony is enough to inspire delight.
Thereupon, they arrange correct sounds,
Play wonderful tunes.
They first pluck "White Snow,"[5]
Then sound forth "Clear *Jue*."
A profusion of notes, continuously flowing, trickling steadily,

3 The third and fifth strings of the zither.

4 The first and fourth strings of the zither. This passage describes how the strings of the zither are tuned in unison.

5 An ancient tune attributed to Music Master Kuang, whose performance of the piece brought down divine birds from the sky.

奐淫衍而優渥
粲奕奕而高逝
馳岌岌以相屬
沛騰遌而競趣
翕韡曄而繁縟
狀若崇山
又象流波
浩兮湯湯
鬱兮峩峩
怫愲煩冤
紆餘婆娑
陵縱播逸
霍濩紛葩
檢容授節
應變合度
競名擅業
安軌徐步
洋洋習習
聲烈遐布
含顯媚以送終
飄餘響乎泰素
若乃高軒飛觀

Plentifully they pour forth, perfectly rich.
Bright and robust, rising high and away,
They hurriedly chase after another, forming a sequence.
Many there are, galloping into each other, jockeying to race ahead;
Then they merge together, vividly resplendent, gracefully fine.
Robust like high mountains,
The sounds also resemble drifting waves—
Vast and flooding,
Dense and towering,
Tangled and troubled, roiling and coiling,
Twisting and turning, twirling and swirling.
Then they rise high and disperse,
Sound as water trickling, petals scattering.
With solemn face, one strums and thrums,
Responding to changes in tempo, according to correct measure.
Vying for fame, he masters his artful enterprise;[1]
Staying the course, he moves slowly and steadily.
Immense and immeasurable, smooth and serene,
The sounds gloriously spread far and wide.
With clear and captivating notes, the piece is brought to its finale;
The lingering sounds drift into the Great Simplicity.
Then, on tall verandas, high-flying towers,

1 "Vying for fame" seems contrary to the values Xi Kang has set forth in this work. I have rendered the phrase literally.

廣夏閑房
冬夜肅清
朗月垂光
新衣翠粲
纓徽流芳
於是器冷絃調
心閑手敏
觸批如志
唯意所擬
初涉淥水
中奏清徵
雅昶唐堯
終詠微子
寬明弘潤
優遊躇跱
拊絃安歌
新聲代起
歌曰
淩扶搖兮憩瀛洲
要列子兮為好仇

1 An ancient tune about which little is known.
2 An ancient tune played by Music Master Kuang.
3 A tune title named after sage-king Yao.
4 A sad tune supposedly composed by a Shang dynasty nobleman who was mourning the imminent collapse of the dynasty.

In wide halls, cloistered chambers,
On winter nights, chilly and still,
The bright moon casts down its light;
New raiments rippling and rustling,
Tasseled sachets wafting fragrance.
Thereupon, the instrument plinks as its strings are tuned;
The mind is relaxed, though the hands are agile.
One taps and strums according to his purpose,
Following only his intent as he plays.
First he wades into "Limpid Waters,"[1]
Midway he plays "Clear *Zhi*,"[2]
Elegantly he expresses "Tang Yao,"[3]
And concludes by singing "Master Wei."[4]
These tunes are expansive and clear, sonorous and rich,
Relaxed and unhurried, tarrying and lingering.
Plucking the strings, singing in accompaniment,
New melodies arise one after another.
And he sings:
"Soaring on the whirlwind, I come to rest on the Ying Isle[5]
And invite Master Lie to be my good companion.[6]

5 One of the three famous mountain islands in the Eastern Sea where immortals were said to have resided.

6 Master Lie was a famous philosopher of ancient China. A passage in *Zhuangzi* depicts him riding on the wind as he traveled, an image Xi Kang likely had in mind.

餐沆瀣兮帶朝霞
眇翩翩兮薄天遊
齊萬物兮超自得
委性命兮任去留
激清響以赴會
何絃歌之綢繆

VI

於是曲引向闌
眾音將歇
改韻易調
奇弄乃發
揚和顏
攘皓腕
飛纖指以馳騖
紛㒖譶以流漫
或徘徊顧慕
擁鬱抑案
盤桓毓養
從容祕翫
闥爾奮逸
風駭雲亂

I sup on evening vapors and wear the morning clouds for my belt;
I freely flutter afar and approach heaven in my roaming.
Seeing the myriad things on a level, I transcend all in self-attainment.
I entrust myself to fate, go or stay as I will."
Clear sounds in high-pitch, all according to the same tempo,
How harmoniously fused are the zither and song!

VI

Then, as the tunes draw to an end,
The various notes are coming to a stop,
Chords are switched, modes are changed,
Then a marvelous melody sounds forth.
The musicians lift their heads, showing a serene countenance;
They pull their sleeves, revealing their fair wrists.
Their lissome fingers briskly fly across the zither,
An abundance of notes profusely flow forth.
At times, the sounds waver, as if looking back longingly,
Smothered and stifled, repressed and restrained,
Vacillating and oscillating, quieting and receding,
At peace and ease, the zither is gently played.
Then quickly the sounds dash off,
Like a sudden wind hurtling clouds into disarray;

牢落凌厲
布濩半散
豐融披離
斐韡奐爛
英聲發越
采采粲粲
或閒聲錯糅
狀若詭赴
雙美竝進
駢馳翼驅
初若將乖
後卒同趣
或曲而不屈
直而不倨
或相凌而不亂
或相離而不殊
時劫掎以慷慨
或怨㜘而躊躇
忽飄颻以輕邁
乍留聯而扶疏
或參譚繁促
複疊攢仄

Diffused and dispersed, they soar strongly and swiftly,
Spread and strewn in every direction.
Full and robust, they disseminate everywhere,
Beaming and blooming, vivid and vibrant.
Beautiful sounds spring forth,
Richly resplendent, brilliantly bright.
At times, intervening sounds are mixed and mingled,
As if creating a musical counterpoint.[1]
Two beautiful phrases advance together,
Like a two-horse team galloping swiftly.
At first, they seem as if they would part;
Then in the end, they tend toward the same point.
At times, they take a turn yet do not bend;
They are straightforward, yet not arrogant.
Or they fall into one another, though without disorder;
Other times, they separate, though without breaking apart.
Sometimes they soar sky-high with impassioned indignation,
Or they rue and regret in halting hesitation.
Abruptly they float and flutter away as if on light air,
Then suddenly they linger together before dispersing far and wide.
At times, they follow one another, clustered and rushed,
Repeating like a refrain, piled and pressed together;

1 "Musical counterpoint" is my rendering of a Chinese term describing independent melodic phrases moving in different directions.

從橫駱驛
奔遯相逼
拊嗟累讚
間不容息
瓌豔奇偉
殫不可識

VII

若乃閑舒都雅
洪纖有宜
清和條昶
案衍陸離
穆溫柔以怡懌
婉順敘而委蛇
或乘險投會
邀隙趨危
譻若離鵾鳴清池
翼若游鴻翔曾崖
紛文斐尾
慊縿離纚
微風餘音
靡靡猗猗

Across and athwart in a continuous line,
They dart and dash, chasing after one another.
The listeners applaud and approve, heaping praise;
There is no pause during which to take a breath.
Splendorous and gorgeous, rare and magnificent,
One cannot fully understand it.

VII

As for playing leisurely and elegantly,
The thick and fine tones find their proper place.
Clear and harmonious, orderly and smooth,
Some high, some low, uneven in their variety.
Serene and soft, in pleasing joy,
Gentle and yielding, winding in their sustain.
At times, they rise to difficult heights to follow the rhythm,
Seek an opening to chase a daring move.
Crying like a stray stork calling out by the limpid pool,
Winging like a roving goose soaring over lofty cliffs,
Variegated in pattern, multi-hued in color,
They hang in unending sustain;
Residual tones carried by a light wind,
Fine and faint, lingering and lasting in the air.

或摟批擽捋
縹繚潎洌
輕行浮彈
明嫿瞭慧
疾而不速
留而不滯
翩緜飄邈
微音迅逝
遠而聽之
若鸞鳳和鳴戲雲中
迫而察之
若衆葩敷榮曜春風
既豐贍以多姿
又善始而令終
嗟姣妙以弘麗
何變態之無窮

VIII

若夫三春之初
麗服以時
乃攜友生
以遨以嬉

At times the picking and plucking[1]
Bind and connect like the sound of colliding waves.
Fingers move lightly, strumming gently,
The sounds are clear and calm, sharp and brilliant:
Swift but never hurried,
Slow but never stagnate.
Fluttering and flying into the distance,
Faint tones quickly depart.
When heard from afar,
They are like simurghs and phoenixes singing harmoniously and sporting in the clouds.
When scrutinized up close,
They are like assorted petals of strewed blossoms shimmering in the vernal breeze.
The music is full and rich, with multifold features,
And excellent from beginning to end.
Graceful and subtle in its grand beauty,
How inexhaustible are its changing manners are!

VIII

At the beginning of the three spring months,
Dressed in beautiful garb fit for the season,
Taking friends by the hand,
Together we ramble and make merry.

1 This line names four ancient finger techniques for playing the zither, which commentators have offered various hypotheses as to what each means, ranging from pulling, pressing, touching, and sliding.

涉蘭圃
登重基
背長林
翳華芝
臨清流
賦新詩
嘉魚龍之逸豫
樂百卉之榮滋
理重華之遺操
慨遠慕而長思

IX

若乃華堂曲宴
密友近賓
蘭肴兼御
旨酒清醇
進南荊
發西秦
紹陵陽
度巴人

1 Thoroughwort is a fragrant flowering plant that frequently appeared in Chinese poetry as a symbol of moral beauty.

2 Chonghua refers to sage-king Shun, who supposedly longed for his parents after he assumed the throne to the kingdom and decided that the position was not worth keeping thus. He then composed a tune on the zither to express his feelings.

We enter a thoroughwort garden,[1]
Ascend lofty hills;
With our backs against the tall woods,
Shaded by a canopy of blossoms,
We look down upon a clear stream
And compose new poems.
We admire the happy ease of fish and reptiles,
Delight in the luxuriant bloom of all plants;
We play the tune left by Chonghua,[2]
Moved, we yearn for the remote and think of the faraway.

IX

Then at an impromptu banquet in a gilded hall,
With close friends and intimate guests,
Delectable cates are served to all,
Choice wine is clear and pure.
We present "Southern Jing,"[3]
Then sound forth "Western Qin,"[4]
Continue with "Lingyang,"[5]
And move on to "Man of Ba."[6]

3 Probably a dance tune from the southern state of Chu.

4 Nothing is known about this tune, though it was likely associated with the state of Qin in the West.

5 An ancient tune, which supposedly was so difficult that, when played, few could join in the singing.

6 Full title "The Man of Ba from the Lower Hamlet," a popular tune that, when played, thousands of people could supposedly join in.

變用雜而竝起
竦眾聽而駭神
料殊功而比操
豈笙籥之能倫

X

若次其曲引所宜
則廣陵止息
東武太山
飛龍鹿鳴
鵾雞遊絃
更唱迭奏
聲若自然
流楚窈窕
懲躁雪煩
下逮謠俗
蔡氏五曲
王昭楚妃

1 “Guangling san” is an ancient zither tune that came to be associated with Xi Kang, who was said to have played it just before his execution. According to traditional accounts, he never taught the piece to anyone, and later musicians sought out this exalted tune. “Stopping the Breath” is one of the sections in a Ming version of “Guangling san”; however, the fact that Xi Kang mentions it alongside “Guangling” suggests that it was a separate tune.

2 Possibly two folk tunes from the state of Qi.

Common and refined sounds commingle and rise together;
They awe the audience and rouse their spirits.
Weighing the special merits of the zither, comparing its tunes,
How can the reed-organ and flute rival it?

X

Now to arrange the tunes in their proper order:
There are "Guangling," "Stopping the Breath,"[1]
"Dongwu," "Mount Tai,"[2]
"Flying Dragon," "Deer Cries,"[3]
"The Stork," "Roving Strings"—[4]
These are sung and played in turns.
The sounds arise as if spontaneously;
Fluid and clear, graceful and gentle,
They end disquiet, wash away worries.
Then come popular songs,
And Mister Cai's five tunes,[5]
"Wang Zhao," "Consort of Chu,"[6]

---

3 "Flying Dragon" possibly refers to a Han ritual piece. "Deer Cries" is the first ode of one of the four major sections of the *Classic of Poetry*.

4 Little is known about either of these tune titles.

5 Five tunes composed by the Han scholar and zither player Cai Yong 蔡邕.

6 Wang Zhaojun 王昭君, one of the four reputed great beauties of premodern China, was made to marry a Xiongnu chieftain to advance the Han government's diplomatic relations with its tribe. There are tunes of lament associated with her. The Consort of Chu was the intelligent and virtuous wife of King Zhuang 莊 of Chu (r. 613–591 BCE).

千里別鶴
280 猶有一切
承閒簉乏
亦有可觀者焉
然非夫曠遠者
284 不能與之嬉遊
非夫淵靜者
不能與之閑止
非夫放達者
288 不能與之無厷
非夫至精者
不能與之析理也

XI

若論其體勢
292 詳其風聲
器和故響逸
張急故聲清
閒遼故音庳
296 絃長故徽鳴
性絜靜以端理
含至德之和平

"Cranes Separated by a Thousand Leagues,"[1]
And still others of their like.
Such tunes can fill and supplement gaps;
These, too, can be appreciated.
Yet unless one is untrammeled and detached,
He cannot share in the pleasures of zither music;
Unless one is profound and serene,
He cannot comfortably dwell with it;
Unless one is carefree and unimpeded,
He cannot ungrudgingly give himself to it;
Unless one is of the utmost refinement,
He cannot comprehend its fundamental principles.

XI

As for discussing its structure and form
And examining in detail its tones,
The instrument is harmonious, hence its sounds resound;
The tension is tightly adjusted, hence the tones are clear.
The spacing between strings is wide, hence low notes can be played;
The strings are long, so studs mark where the notes ring clear.
It is by nature pure and serene, proper and upright,
It embodies the harmonious tranquility of utmost virtue.

1 A tune supposedly composed by Muzi 牧子 of Shangling, whose parents wanted him to take another wife since his wife of five years had not born him a son. One night, he was so moved by the sight of his distressed wife listening to the cries of cranes in the middle of the night that he composed this presumably mournful tune.

誠可以感盪心志
而發洩幽情矣
是故懷戚者聞之
莫不憯懍慘悽
愀愴傷心
含哀懊咿
不能自禁
其康樂者聞之
則欨愉懽釋
抃舞踊溢
留連瀾漫
嗢噱終日
若和平者聽之
則怡養悅悆
淑穆玄真
恬虛樂古
棄事遺身
是以伯夷以之廉
顏回以之仁
比干以之忠

1 "Mysterious and true" is a literal translation of the reference to the original and utmost state or source, the Dao or Way, signifying here purity and wholeness.

2 Bo Yi was a noble scion of the Shang dynasty, who along with his brother Shu Qi, refused to serve the succeeding Zhou dynasty, choosing instead to eat bracken fern

Truly it can move the heart and mind
And release inmost feelings.
Therefore, if the down and forlorn hear it,
None will not become distressed and depressed,
Sorrow and sadness will wound their hearts.
The pain they hold inside will be so strong,
They will not be able to restrain themselves.
If the well and happy hear it,
They will be joyous and jubilant.
Clapping and dancing, they spring and skip about,
Lingering and lagging, free from inhibition,
Roaring with laughter the whole day long.
If the harmonious and calm hear it,
They will be gratified and gladdened.
Gentle and placid, they seek the mysterious and true;[1]
Untrammeled and unoccupied by worries, delighting in antiquity,
They cast aside worldly affairs, leave behind material things.
Therefore, it is from the zither that Bo Yi acquired his incorruptibility,[2]
Yan Hui acquired his benevolence,[3]
Bi Gan acquired his loyalty,[4]

rather than the "grain of Zhou." They ultimately starved to death while resolutely upholding their principles.

3 The favorite disciple of Confucius, Yan Hui was said to have been devoted to the practice of benevolence.

4 Bi Gan loyally served the last ruler of the Shang, a tyrant whom he endeavored to rectify. For his efforts, he was executed.

尾生以之信
惠施以之辯給
萬石以之訥慎
其餘觸類而長
所致非一
同歸殊途
或文或質
總中和以統物
咸日用而不失
其感人動物
蓋亦弘矣

XII

于時也
金石寢聲
匏竹屏氣
王豹輟謳
狄牙喪味
天吳踊躍于重淵
王喬披雲而下墜

1 Wei Sheng had promised to meet a woman under a bridge. Although she did not show up, he refused to leave even as the tide rose. He died hugging a pillar but keeping his word.

2 A logician who figures frequently in *Zhuangzi* as one of the philosopher's favorite adversaries in debate.

Wei Sheng acquired his faithfulness,[1]
Hui Shi acquired his gift for debate,[2]
And Wanshi acquired his prudent cautiousness.[3]
As for the rest, inferring from these examples, the list would grow.
The manifestations of zither music are not one,
Yet they return to the same point, though by different paths.
Sometimes it is ornate, sometimes it is plain;
It holds together the Central Harmony, governing all things.[4]
It can be used every day without error;
Its power to move people and stir things
Is great indeed!

XII

At the time it is being played,
Metal and stone rest their sounds,
Gourd and bamboo block all breath,
Wang Bao stops his singing,[5]
Di Ya loses his ability to taste,[6]
Tianwu leaps from his abyssal pool,[7]
Wang Qiao opens up clouds and descends,[8]

3 On Wanshi, see p. 297 fn. 1.
4 Central Harmony refers to the ideal of the mean and balanced.
5 A famous singer of antiquity mentioned in *Mencius*.
6 A man of antiquity famous for his discerning sense of taste.
7 Mythical god of the waters mentioned in the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*.
8 An ancient immortal who was said to be able to ride the clouds.

舞鸑鷟于庭階
游女飄焉而來萃
感天地以致和
況蚑行之眾類
嘉斯器之懿茂
詠茲文以自慰
永服御而不厭
信古今之所貴

XIII

亂曰
愔愔琴德
不可測兮
體清心遠
邈難極兮
良質美手
遇今世兮
紛綸翕響
冠眾蓺兮
識音者希
孰能珍兮
能盡雅琴
唯至人兮

The phoenix dances on the steps of the courtyard,
And river goddesses glide in and assemble there.
As the zither moves heaven and earth, bringing about harmony,
How much more can it affect the myriad creatures that crawl about?
To extol the perfect excellence of this instrument,
I chant this verse to comfort myself.
I shall always use it and never tire of it;
Indeed it has been prized from antiquity to today.

XIII

The coda reads:
Solemn and serene is the zither's virtue,
It cannot be fathomed.
The purity of form, remoteness of intent,
So far beyond that it is difficult to reach.
Instruments of the best quality and finest players
Can be encountered in the present age;
Its rich and beautiful sounds in harmony
Make it the crown of all the arts.
Those who understand its tones are few,
And who can treasure it?
Being able to appreciate fully the elegant zither,
There is only the Perfected Man.

[*Wen xuan*, 2:835–849]

Additional Notes

A Pentasyllabic Poem Presented to the Cultivated Talent 五言贈秀才詩 (also titled "Thoughts of the Ancients in Pentasyllabic Verse" 五言古意)

Unlike most modern editors (e.g. Lu Xun, Lu Qinli), Dai Mingyang treats this poem as the first of the group of poems presented to Xi Xi upon his entering the army, making a series of nineteen poems in total. The Wu Manuscript separates this poem from the eighteen that follow and assigns it the title, "An Ancient Air in Pentasyllabic Verse, One Poem" 五言古風一首. The black ink corrections to the Wu Manuscript emend the title to "Thoughts of the Ancients in Pentasyllabic Verse, One Poem" 五言古意一首. The first six lines of this poem are quoted in *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 under the simple title, "Xi Shuye's Poem Presented to the Cultivated Talent" 嵇叔夜贈秀才詩, without any mention of the occasion being Xi Xi's entering the army. See *Yiwen leiju* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999), 90.1560. It is quite likely that Xi Kang wrote two separate sets of poems to his brother, one group in tetrasyllabic and this one in pentasyllabic meter. This poem and the eighteen that follow are clearly related as they develop the same set of themes, tropes, and sentiments; however, they need not be taken as a single set. I am treating this poem as separate from the set of eighteen poems addressed to Xi Xi.

4 *Yuyi*, literally "feathers [used as] a model," appears in the Top Yang of *Yijing* hexagram 53, "Jian" (Gradual Advance).

10 I have adopted the Wu Manuscript variant *wei* 維 in place of *yi* 疑.

13 The phrase "the situation is unfavorable" is borrowed from a passage in *Zhuangzi* 20, "Shan mu" 山木 (Mountain Tree), about how monkeys that formerly swung highly and freely among trees, evading even the best archers, must move with fear and caution as they maneuver through prickly plants. This is not because they suddenly lost their dexterity and suppleness but because they have encountered "a situation that is unfavorable, in which they cannot fully display their abilities." *Zhuangzi jishi* (hereafter cited as *ZZJS*), ed. Guo Qingfan (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), 2:688.

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22 I have adopted the Wu Manuscript variant *bi* 必 in place of *xin* 心.

26 The phrase "harbor the jade" (*huai yu* 懷玉) appears in a synonymous formulation in *Laozi* 70: "If those who understand me are few, then someone like me is precious. Thus it is so that the sage dons coarse woolen cloth but harbors jade in his chest." *Wang Bi ji jiaoshi* (hereafter cited as *WBJJS*), ed. Lou Yulie (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), 1:176. The commentary by Wang Bi 王弼, which Xi Kang must have known, explains that he who finds few who can understand him has no companion (*wu pi* 無匹). The jade represents, according to Wang Bi, one's genuineness (*zhen* 真). In the context of Xi Kang's line, jade also implies one's talent.

Poems Presented to My Elder Brother the Cultivated Talent on His Entry into the Army, Eighteen Poems 四言贈兄秀才入軍詩十八首

I.1 A verbatim quote from *Shijing* 216, in which a pair of ducks is netted and captured.

I.2 A verbatim quote from *Shijing* 181, in which the birds function as affective imagery for men who toil away on distant expeditions.

III.3 A verbatim quote from *Shijing* 3, a poem about someone who, yearning for a loved one, climbs the highest earth and exhausts horses and coachmen in search for that person.

III.4 A verbatim quote from *Shijing* 9, a poem about a bride-to-be's exemplary observance of ritual propriety and the proper separation of the sexes that is symbolized by the river flowing between the girls and the boys.

III.6 A verbatim quote from *Shijing* 119, a poem about a solitary traveler, who wishes for the company of brothers and kinsmen but finds none among his fellow travelers. The refrain "a man has no brothers" in that poem has particular resonance here.

III.8 A verbatim quote from *Shijing* 28, in which the image of flying swallows parallels the scene of a lady taking leave of her natal home for her new home in marriage, leaving behind her kin "shedding tears like rain."

V.6 The Wu Manuscript reads 遐/佳. Although *xia* ("distant") makes good sense in this parting poem, *jiaren* ("the fair one") is more fitting given the poems' various borrowings from *Chuci*. In the *Chuci* tradition, "the fair one" and its synonym, "the beautiful one" (*meiren* 美人), have been interpreted by many scholars to be symbols for the

ruler (or the mate the poet longs for). The term *jiaren* appears again in Poem XV.

VIII.3 A verbatim quote from *Shijing* 61, a poem about the great distance between two people and the undaunted will of the longing one to reach the other by whatever means.

X.7 I have adopted the variant *tian* 田 in the Wu Manuscript and *Wen xuan* in place of *tian* 畋.

XI.4 The Wu Manuscript reads 室/邀.

XII.5 A verbatim quote from *Shijing* 35, a poem that highlights the precariousness of marriage and, by extension, any other type of alliance.

XII.7 A verbatim quote from *Shijing* 131, a poem lamenting the deaths of three men who had to follow their lord, Duke Mu of Qin 秦穆公, to his grave as death companions. The warning here seems to be the ill fate of officials who pledge loyalty to the wrong master.

XII.9 I have adopted the variant *wu* 悟 in *Wen xuan* in place of *wu* 寤. These two characters were interchangeable.

XV.7 I have adopted the variant *mingqin* 鳴琴 in *Wen xuan* in place of *seqin* 瑟琴 because the latter suggests a category that is too general for such a specific reference to the object the poet keeps at his side.

XVIII.16 In *Zhuangzi* 31, "Yu fu" 漁夫 (Old Fisherman), an old fisherman mocks Confucius for toiling to set the world right, sneering: "To weary one's mind and wear out one's body is to imperil one's true [or genuine] nature. Alas! How far he is separated from the Dao!" *ZZJS*, 3:1025.

XVIII.17 In *Laozi* 44, the following question is posed: "Reputation or one's person, which is dear" 名與身孰親? Yet in *Laozi* 13, we are cautioned against the consequences of valuing one's person (i.e. putting too great of an emphasis on life): "The reason why I have met with great calamity is because I am bound by my own person. When I am no longer bound by my own person, then what calamity could I have?" Wang Bi explains that "no longer being bound by one's own person" means "to return to the natural." *WBJJS*, 1:29.

A Poem on My Indignation in Confinement 幽憤詩

Dai Mingyang notes a probable reference in the title to a description of Sima Qian in his *Han shu* biography: "When he was sentenced to extreme punishment, he was confined and thus expressed his indigna-

tion (*you er fa fen* 幽而發憤).” *You fen* could also mean “innermost frustrations.”

2 Xi Kang rewrites a line from *Shijing* 286: “I met with a house unachieved” 遭家不造, meaning a child meets the situation of a house without the patriarch.

7 One re-transcribed version of the Wu Manuscript reads 妲/姐. *Jie* 姐 was a substitute for *ju* 嫭, glossed in *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 as *jiao* 嬌 (coddle, spoil), which matches Xi Kang’s description of his upbringing in other writings.

20 The two lines from *Shijing* 206 read: “Do not push forward the great carriage; / The dust will blind [literally, “darken”] you.” Some modern scholars have interpreted Xi Kang’s line to mean advancing the business of state by taking a post will result in soiling oneself with filthy politics. Commentators have drawn parallels between Ziwen’s poor placement of trust in Ziyu with either Sima Zhao’s or Xi Kang’s trust in Lü Xun.

23–24 With reference to the verbatim quote from *Shijing* 254, Dai Mingyang suggests that Xi Kang may have had in mind the Qi Ying 祁盈 episode in *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 (Duke Zhao, 28th year). When Ying found out that a member of his clan, Qi Sheng 祁勝, had exchanged wives with another man, he wanted to arrest them. His friend Sima Shuyou 司馬叔游 advised against it, quoting two lines from *Shijing* 254: “When the people have many depravities,/ Do not yourself set forth depravities before others.” He added that since those without any principles were in power, he feared that Ying would not escape harm. Ying replied that private punishment within the family did not concern the state. However, he was soon proven wrong as Sheng bribed someone to slander Ying before the marquis, who consequently ordered his execution. This episode would have resonated with Xi Kang, as he pondered his own imprisonment.

55 A verbatim quote from *Shijing* 34.

58 The Wu Manuscript reads 無/忘.

66 A near verbatim quote from the opening passage in *Zhuangzi* 3, “Yang sheng zhu” 養生主 (The Essentials of Nurturing Life).

Telling of My Intent, Two Poems 述志詩二首

I.2 The Wu Manuscript reads 躍/濯.

I.5 The Wu Manuscript reads 降/景.

I.7 The Wu Manuscript reads 儔/匹.

I.8 The Huang Edition reads 疇肯/□步. Dai Mingyang suspects the missing character in the Wu Manuscript is *gui* 圭, which is errant for *kui* 跬, forming the compound *kuibu* 跬步 (literally, "half a pace"), the basis of my translation. This couplet has been interpreted substantially differently by modern editors, mainly due to the variants and missing character. As well, *youyou* 悠悠 can refer either to the common multitude (the vulgar crowd that is the subject of Xi Kang's disdain in many of his works) or the remote distance of the past (in this context, the ancient sage rulers who are far removed in time from Xi Kang).

I.17 The Wu Manuscript reads 朋/鵬, emended to 鵬 in the black ink correction. Lu Xun suspects *peng* 朋 to be an errant character for *ming* 明 and that *jiaoming* 焦明, a bird like the phoenix, is the intended reference.

II.1 Zhang Pu's 張溥 edition of *Xi Zhongsan ji* 嵇中散集 reads 擅 rather than 檀. The same reading appears in both the Huang Edition and Wu Manuscript. That variant is the basis of my emendation and translation.

II.7 *Yuan shi* 遠實 appears in the *Xiang zhuan* (Commentary on the Images) for the Fourth Yin of *Yijing* hexagram 4, "Meng" 蒙 (Youthful Ignorance): "The meanness associated with being bound up by Youthful Ignorance results from being alone and distant from the real [represented by the solid yang line]." Wang Bi explains the fact that the Fourth Yin is sandwiched between two yin lines, and thus distant from yang lines, signifies that one is unable to get near a worthy one and thus manifest his ambition. This therefore leads to baseness. See *WBJJS*, 1: 241–42.

II.9–10 A reference to *Analects* 18/5: "What is past cannot be admonished. What is to come can still be pursued."

II.16 I have adopted the Wu Manuscript variant *you* 幽 in place of *qi* 其.

Wandering with Immortals 遊仙詩

7 I have adopted the Wu Manuscript variant *yi* 弃 in place of *qi* 棄. Most modern scholars take 弃 as an errant character for *yi* 异, which is glossed in *Shuowen jiezi* to mean *ju* 舉 (lift).

16 The Wu Manuscript reads 友/交 and 板/梧.

Hexasyllabic Poems, Ten Poems 六言詩十首

III The heading of this poem appears to be corrupt. Lu Xun believes that *you* 有 is an error and should be emended to *he* 何, making the heading a rhetorical question. I follow Dai Mingyang, who argues instead to read *wei* 為 as *wei* 偽.

III.1 Dai Mingyang notes that the Wu Manuscript reads *faling* 法令 for *wei fa* 為法. He believes the Wu Manuscript variant to be correct on the basis that it is an obvious quotation from *Laozi*.

V This heading draws from a lesson in *Laozi* 50 on how to approach life and death, the central argument of which states that "placing too much emphasis on life" 生生之厚 leads people to death. Wang Bi offers this elaboration in his commentary: "When too much emphasis is placed on life, it becomes a place without life (i.e. a place of death). One who is good at taking care of life does not use life for the sake of living. Thus there is no land of death for him." *WBJJS*, 1:135.

VII.4 I have adopted the Wu Manuscript variant of *zhizu wuying* 知足無營 for *suoyu buzu* 所欲不足.

X *Zhuangzi* 28, "Rang wang" 讓王 (Abdicating the Throne), tells the following story: Yuan Xian lived in a tiny thatched hut with a partial door woven of tumbleweed. It was leaky above and damp below, but he sat with a dignified demeanor and played his zither. Once Zigong, decked out in resplendent robes, arrived in a grand carriage to pay him a visit. Seeing the apparently sorry state Yuan Xian was in, Zigong asked about the nature of his distress (*bing* 病). Yuan Xian replied: "Lacking wealth is called poverty; having learning but not putting it to use is called distress. Today, I am poor but not in distress!" *ZZJS*, 3:975–6.

Recomposing Tetrasyllabic Verse, Seven Poems 重作四言詩七首 (also titled "Imitations of the Song of Qiu Hu" 代秋胡歌 or "Ballad of Qiu Hu" 秋胡行)

Differing from the Huang Edition, the Wu Manuscript lists this title as "Recomposing Hexasyllabic Verse, Ten Poems, Imitations of the Song of Qiu Hu, Seven Poems" 重作六言詩十首代秋胡歌七首. In the black ink correction of the Wu Manuscript, the title was changed to "Recomposing Tetrasyllabic Verse, Seven Poems" 重作四言詩七首, likely on the ground that the poems in this group are composed mostly

in tetrasyllabic lines and none in hexasyllabic. The deletion of "Imitations of the Song of Qiu Hu" from the title likewise may be justified by the rationale, one would surmise, that the *yuefu* ballad would make an unusual genre for expressing the philosophical content found in these poems.

I.6 Most modern editors believe this line alludes to the Top Yin of *Yijing* hexagram 55, "Feng" 豐 (Abundance): "Keep abundance in the house, screen off your family." According to Wang Bi, this line statement describes the preconditions (abundant supply in the house, sheltered protection for the family) for concealing oneself in utmost seclusion. See *WBJJS*, 2:494. However, the context of Xi Kang's poem does not support this reading. Some modern editors interpret the line to mean instead "enlarging one's house, concealing one's household" and the harm in the next line thus refers to inviting trouble by building a large, rich house. This interpretation is closer to my reading.

II.10 The Wu Manuscript reads 志/計.

III.1 This line alludes to the Third Yang of *Yijing* hexagram 15, "Qian" 謙 (Modesty): "Diligent about his modesty, the gentleman maintains his position to the end. Good fortune." *WBJJS*, 1:295.

III.5 This lines alludes to the *Tuan zhuan* (Commentary on the Judgments) appended to hexagram 15: "The Way of Heaven makes the waning full and the modest increase." *WBJJS*, 1:295.

IV.2 I have adopted the Wu Manuscript variant *ling ren ku* 令人枯 in place of *ji ku* 疾枯. The pattern of using five syllables for the second line of each poem in this series makes 令人枯 preferable.

IV.6 The Wu Manuscript reads 下/不.

IV.10 The Wu Manuscript reads 自令/今自.

V.1 "Reject wisdom and cast aside learning" is a restatement of a dictum found in both the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*. *Laozi* 19 states: "Reject sagehood and cast aside wisdom, and the people will benefit a hundredfold" 絕聖棄智，民利百倍. *WBJJS*, 1:45. Laozi's argument is that sagehood and wisdom are "mere decoration" (*wen* 文) and are inadequate for creating the ideal government. In *Zhuangzi* 10, "Qu qie" 胠篋 (Rifling Trunks), we find a nearly identical injunction: "Reject sagehood and cast aside knowledge, then the great thieves will be of no more" 絕聖棄知，大盜乃止. *ZZJS*, 2:353. Like Laozi, Zhuangzi views all of the artificial means used by

the sages to create order, such as laws, ultimately to be for the benefit of a great thief who can then more easily usurp the government, just as a small thief can more easily cart away trunks of treasure packed by the owner. Therefore, the less the sages do, the less thieves will be able to steal.

V.5–6 This couplet is taken almost verbatim from a description of the True Man in *Zhuangzi* 6, "Da zong shi" 大宗師 (The Great and Venerable Teacher): 過過悔，當而不自得. *ZZJS*, 1:226. Dai Yangming notes that the Wu Manuscript has the variant line 過而復悔 and suspects that 復 is an errant character for 弗, a close homophone. The True Man in *Zhuangzi* possessed perfect equanimity: he was not pleased when alive and did not despise death; he engaged with everything but held onto nothing. Therefore, nothing burdened him. He was neither regretful when committing error or nor complacent when doing right.

V.8 This alludes to Ban Si's 班嗣 description of Zhuangzi, as quoted in Ban Gu's 班固 (32–91) autobiography: "When he fished in a gully, the myriad things could not trouble his intent; when he rested on a hill, the realm could not alter his joy." *Han shu*, 70A.4205.

V.9 *Zhuangzi* 21, "Tian Zifang" 田子方, recounts an encounter between Confucius and Laozi in which the latter had just finished washing his hair and had it loosely spread over his shoulders. The description "he did not even seem human" 似非人 attempts to capture Laozi's otherworldliness. *ZZJS*, 2:711.

V.10 I have adopted the Wu Manuscript variant *qi* 氣 in place of *zhe* 者. *Laozi* 42 states that "the ten thousand things, carrying *yin* and embracing *yang*, merge into harmony through the coalescence of these forces" 沖氣以為和. *WBJJS*, 1:117.

Thinking of My Loved Ones 思親詩

16 Dai Mingyang suspects *shou* 壽 to be an errant character for *qing* 輕. There is no need for such emendation as *shou* makes perfectly good sense as a character interchangeable with *chou* 疇 (companion) in old texts.

23 The Wu Manuscript reads 親日遠兮思日深/日遠邁兮思予心.

24 The Wu Manuscript reads 流襟/不禁.

27 The Wu Manuscript reads 遠不聞/天不聞.

28 I have adopted the Wu Manuscript variant *tan cheng yun* 歎成雲 in place of *tan qingyun* 歎青雲.

A Response to the Two Guos, Three Poems 答二郭詩三首

I.2 The Wu Manuscript reads 不能/下京.

I.11 I have adopted the Wu Manuscript variant *zhi* 智 in place of *zhi* 志.

I.21 Following the Wu Manuscript, I have emended the text from 三 to 二 since Xi Kang was writing to two people.

I.24 I have adopted the Wu Manuscript variant *nengbu* 能不 in place of *buzhi* 不知.

III.12 Following Wang Shizhen's 王士禎 *Gushi jian* 古詩箋, I read Sou 搜 instead of Ji 稷. I have also adopted the Wu Manuscript variant *wei* 畏 in place of *jie* 嗟.

III.14 Following the Wu Manuscript and Lu Xun, I have emended the text from *pu* 璞 (uncut jade) to *pu* 樸 (uncarved block, the unwrought). The uncarved block is akin to the mysterious void, that is, the Dao, and it figures in numerous passages in *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*.

A Poem to Ruan Deru 與阮德如詩

3 I have adopted the Wu Manuscript variant *wu zi* 吾子 in place of *shu zi* 數子.

26 The Wu Manuscript reads 休/怵.

27 The Wu Manuscript reads 垾/旱.

28 The Wu Manuscript reads 看/完.

A Poem Composed for a Wine Drinking Gathering 酒會詩

The Huang Edition, as well as *Guang Wen xuan* 廣文選 and *Shi ji* 詩紀, grouped this poem together with the first six poems from the group of "Tetrasyllabic Poems" under the title of "Composed for a Wine Drinking Gathering, Seven Poems."

4 The Wu Manuscript reads 臺/基.

18 This line could also be rendered as "Preserving the long-held [aim, aspiration] continues from beginning to end." Xi Kang often writes about his long-cherished aim of being a recluse, transcendent of all worldly affairs.

Tetrasyllabic Poems, Eleven Poems 四言詩十一首

My translation follows Lu Xun's arrangement of these eleven poems as a loose group. Most modern editors, excepting Dai Mingyang, accept this grouping. In the Huang Edition and Wu Manuscript, poems 7–10 are grouped together. Poem 11 is titled "Miscellaneous Poem" 雜詩 in the *Wen xuan* and in the red ink correction of the Wu Manuscript.

III.1 The Huang Edition has missing characters in place of 藻氾.

V.1 Lu Xun substitutes the variant *ling* 苓 for *leng* 冷, the original character in the Wu Manuscript. I follow the Wu Manuscript since the compound *lengfeng* 冷風 makes good sense as "gentle breeze," as seen in *Zhuangzi* 2, "Qi wu lun."

V.7 This lined could also be rendered from the perspective of the flowers: "Ah! How distinct is my look."

V.8 A verbatim quote from *Shijing* 204.

VII.6 I share Lu Xun's suspicion that *zi* 自 is an errant character for *xi* 息.

IX.10 A verbatim quote from *Shijing* 26.

XI.9 A verbatim quote from *Shijing* 21.

Pentasyllabic Verse, Three Poems 五言詩三首

These three poems are not listed in the Huang Edition.

II.1 I share Lu Xun's suspicion that *jia* 家 is an errant character for *ji* 寂.

III.17 I agree with Lu Xun that *shi jian ren* 世間人 should be *ren jian shi* 人間世, which recalls the title of the fourth chapter of *Zhuangzi*.

Rhapsody on the Zither 琴賦

16 *Liuchen zhu Wen xuan* 六臣注文選 reads *xuan* 玄 for *hu* 互. "Dark" makes better sense than "mutual" here.

189 I have rendered *jiansheng* literally as "intervening sounds." A number of scholars have offered guesses as to its precise meaning: R.H. Van Gulik, "chords"; Dai Mingyang, "licentious sounds"; and David Knechtges, "mixed sounds."

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